a modern history of the mid-20th century development of chess

GARRY KASPAROV
ON MY GREAT PREDECESSORS
PART II

with the participation of Dmitry Plisetsky

Euwe
Botvinnik
Smyslov
Tal

EVERYMAN CHESS

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INTRODUCTION

Dramas of the Chess Kings

In Volume 1 of *My Great Predecessors* I talked about the chess kings of the distant past, about the first four official world champions – Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine and their outstanding opponents. The second volume that you now have before you is devoted to the lives and games of the next four champions – Euwe, Botvinnik, Smyslov and Tal, and also Keres, Bronstein and Geller.

I should remind you that compiled in this book are not only the best games of the former stars, analysed anew with the help of a computer, but also the 'sore points' of chess history – the critical, turning points of matches for the world championship. In chess the champions changed for various reasons, but the primary one was usually historic: the continuous and rapid development of the game itself.

As my second Yuri Dokhoian wittily expressed it, with the years each world champion begins to 'calcify' – in other words, to become inflexible and be transformed into a living monument. That is, he gradually ceases to add something new to chess and to grasp the dominating tendency of its development. And sooner or later the inevitable retribution sets in, since the young challenger, on the contrary, usually makes a step forward.

This pattern can be traced in many matches for the world championship, beginning even with the unofficial Morphy-Anderssen match (1858), in which the American genius undoubtedly played the chess of the future. Later Steinitz accomplished a genuine revolution, creating a theory of positional play and putting opening play onto more or less serious, scientific lines. However, in his matches with Chigorin he 'calcified', not because of his advanced age, but on account of his terrible obstinacy, as he tried to uphold his principles in extremely dubious positions. His adherence to dogmas cost him many lost points, and he remained on the throne only thanks to his enormous practical strength; had Steinitz played in a more flexible manner, his superiority over his contemporaries would have been undisputed. But then a highly talented pupil appeared – the ultra-flexible and ultra-resourceful Lasker, and the now thoroughly inflexible Steinitz was unable to cope with him.

Lasker reigned for so long, for the reason that he was completely omnivorous and universal, assimilating and making use of any new chess trends. It is a pity, of course, that in 1912-14 he did not play a match with either Rubinstein, or Capablanca. I don't know how these duels with the shining leaders of the new generation would have ended, but one thing is clear: at that time Lasker was still in excellent form and had retained his real practical strength.

The First World War significantly changed the balance of power in the chess arena. Lasker lived in poverty, Schlechter died, and Rubinstein became a pale shadow of his former self. Alekhine's progress was seriously delayed, as a result of which he matured much later than nature had intended; given normal development, without the War, imprisonment and the Revolution, Alekhine would already have been a quite worthy challenger by 1920.

Only Capablanca was not affected by the War, and he was able to develop as a player. Although, in fact I think that in those years he was no longer developing, but at least he lived comfortably, prepared little by little, played in American tournaments – and retained his former strength. In the 1921 match with the shaky Lasker he gained a confident victory, but chess lost much due to the fact that such a genius as Capa did not have to extend himself fully. The ease of his victories, especially in New York 1927 (where Lasker, Réti and Bogoljubow were absent, and Alekhine was thinking only of second place), lulled the Cuban, and he came to his senses only towards the end of his match with Alekhine, when the score was 2-4. However, he was no longer able to save his crown: he was let down by his being unaccustomed to hard work, and in addition the genie had escaped from the bottle!

Of course, in the 1927 match Capablanca had 'calcified', and this was observed by Lasker, who saw in Alekhine's victory 'a rejuvenation of the culture of the game itself, which has clearly become necessary, to avoid the stagnation threatening our art'. Yes, Capa was the last representative of the classical chess, stemming from Steinitz and Lasker, and in it he was invincible. He was the ideal player of that era! However, the Cuban overlooked the arrival of a new generation in chess and he was too late in adopting the ideas propagated by Nimzowitsch and Réti, and brought to the fore by Alekhine. A classical wrestler encountered the unusual techniques of judo and karate...

These hypermodern revelations – the Nimzo-Indian and Grünfeld Defences etc. – swiftly conquered the chess world, as play now extended beyond the bounds of the Queen's Gambit, Tarrasch Defence, Ruy Lopez and Italian Game, and the late 1920s was marked by a flourishing of chess thinking. New people arrived – a new game began! Alekhine was the catalyst of this process (40 years later Fischer was a similar catalyst). The great Russian master, after absorbing and enriching the ideas of hypermodernism, played a different, more complicated form of chess and accomplished an unparalleled feat by succeeding, after all the adversity that had befallen him, in reaching the top.

Alas, Capablanca was unable to regain his former halo of invincibility: after his defeat at the hands of Alekhine the deference for the 'chess machine' disappeared, and even grandmasters who had been defeated many times by the Cuban began playing much more confidently against him. And as for the young players led by Botvinnik and Keres, he altogether could not keep pace with them. In short, in the new form of the game Capa was somewhat lost...

But what about Alekhine? After crushing Bogoljubow in the 1929 match and scoring brilliant victories in San Remo 1930 and Bled 1931, he too little by little began to 'calcify'! All the summits had been conquered and he had apparently lost his sense of purpose. He also won London and Bern 1932 'on autopilot' and then set off on an endless round-the-world trip with simultaneous displays: USA, Mexico, Cuba, Hawaii, Japan, Shanghai, Hong Kong, the Philippines and so on. Meanwhile, life was not standing still and a new era was beginning in chess.

The 1934 match with Bogoljubow already showed the onset of a crisis in Alekhine's play: the champion experienced colossal opening problems. He played in an audacious and bizarre manner, and often ended up in indifferent positions – but extricated himself thanks to his enormous practical strength! Bogoljubow lacked the consistency and accuracy to punish his opponent.

And then came Euwe – the leader of a new generation, born at the start of the 20th century, a player who was perhaps not so striking as Bogoljubow, but highly erudite and extremely consistent, rational and methodical. It was precisely this style that was the most unpleasant for Alekhine, and in the 1935 match, to everyone's surprise, there was a change of champion. A detailed account of how Euwe managed to wrest the title, and why he again conceded it in the 1937 return match, will be found in the chapter about the fifth world champion.

Whereas the first half of the 1930s was a period of stagnation as regards the emergence of new, young contenders to the throne (Euwe, Flohr and then complete quiet), in the second half of the decade the splendid next generation loudly announced itself – Botvinnik, Keres, Fine, Reshevsky... The declining, almost 50-year-old champion faced a difficult match for the crown, but a world war again interfered with the course of chess history. This was a pity, since a match between Alekhine and either Botvinnik or Keres would have been very interesting and important for chess.

The war again sharply changed the balance of power in the chess arena. Following Lasker and Capablanca, the exhausted but also undefeated Alekhine passed away. Keres came under the Soviet-Nazi machine, Reshevsky was out of practice, Fine gave up the game altogether, Euwe had fallen hopelessly behind, while the young Smyslov and Bronstein, by contrast, had not yet caught up... In short, by 1948 of the top-class fighters only Botvinnik remained. For him the Second World War played the same role as the First did for Capablanca: it cleared the way to the throne. The wars removed their main rivals: the First World War – Rubinstein, and the Second – Keres. It is probable that both Capa and Botvinnik would all the same have become champions, but with a natural course of events there would have been both a different configuration, and a different struggle.

In the Botvinnik era there occurred the second, after Steinitz, revolutionary change in approach to opening theory. Steinitz's ideas had an enormous influence on at least two generations of players. They all played the classical schemes (Queen's Gambit, Steinitz Defence to the Ruy Lopez etc.), and were guided by common sense: why seek 'disreputable', risky openings, if there was a simple way of obtaining a safe position?! The classical theory of the early 20th century developed at a rapid pace, and its prime mover was Rubinstein. A serious expansion of the range of openings began with Alekhine and the hypermodernists, and was continued by the energetic efforts of the great methodologist Euwe, but a genuinely revolutionary leap was accomplished by Botvinnik, who had carefully studied the experience of his predecessors, in particular Rubinstein, Alekhine and Euwe.

They all thought schematically and endeavoured to link the opening with a subsequent plan in the middlegame. But whereas earlier it was customary with Black to play strictly for equality, Botvinnik went further and created a system of opening preparation, with which Black plays to seize the initiative from the very first moves. He showed that this is possible! Botvinnik deliberately disrupted the positional balance, choosing sharp, committal variations, but ones that he had studied deeply – and he achieved excellent results. Botvinnik created some original opening systems, and in addition he reinterpreted a number of typical positions, forcing them to be looked at anew – for example, those with an isolated d4-pawn. And in general he had a different, far more global approach to the solving of opening problems.

The next four world champions – Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian and Spassky – did not achieve any radical progress in the opening and they developed theory along the lines of the Botvinnik era, which thus continued to the end of the 1960s. Finally, Fischer created the next revolutionary leap forward, for the first time demonstrating the entire power of opening preparation for both colours, sharply expanding the range of openings studied and, in effect, laying the foundations of present-day professional chess. Moreover, initially Fischer, like Steinitz in his time, was extremely obstinate in his choice of opening set-ups, but then he found in himself the strength to become more flexible and made himself almost unbeatable…

Note what an interesting line can be traced: Steinitz (1st champion) – Botvinnik (6th) – Fischer (11th), that is, a revolution was accomplished by every fifth champion!

Incidentally, in the second half of the 20th century too, the champions who became complacent and ceased to be the obvious leaders of chess thinking, also lost their title. It is always difficult to catch up with time, since the leaders of new generations introduce into chess their ideas and particular styles, and more easily solve those playing problems that were previously considered complicated.

Thus, whereas in the late 1940s Botvinnik was superior to everyone, in the early 1950s a very powerful new generation had emerged and its leader Bronstein almost took the title from the champion, who had not played for a long time (1951). Botvinnik realised that he was falling behind, and he again began working and threw himself into tournament play. In the next match, with Smyslov (1954) he had almost ceased to 'calcify' and he confidently remained on the throne.

Then Botvinnik twice conceded the crown – to Smyslov (1957) and to Tal (1960), but unfortunately for them they both had stopped moving forward and a year later they each lost to their mighty opponent, who had learned the lessons from his defeat and modified his play. But in the match with Petrosian (1963) Botvinnik no longer knew how to overcome his impregnable opponent, and it is doubtful whether anything would have changed, even if they had played a return match.

In turn, Petrosian logically conceded the throne to the dynamic Spassky (1969), and he to the irrepressible Fischer (1972). However, in the second half of the 1970s it would have been rather hard even for Fischer to combat the young Karpov. But in 1985, strangely enough, even Karpov began to 'calcify' very slightly. True, after losing the crown he as though came to his senses, and for a long time afterwards he demonstrated good results and excellent play (for which the author of these lines is also hoping, after slightly 'calcifying' before the 2000 match with Kramnik – but that is the topic of another book).

I will talk in detail about the chess careers of Petrosian, Spassky, Fischer and Karpov in subsequent volumes, but in the present one I invite you to enjoy the games of their remarkable predecessors.

In conclusion, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to USSR Honoured Trainers Alexander Nikitin and Mark Dvoretsky for their help in the concluding stage of preparation of this volume.

Garry Kasparov
October 2003

CHAPTER ONE

Max the Fifth

The fifth world champion Max Euwe (20 May 1901 – 26 November 1981) was a man of very many parts: mathematician, engineer, astronomer, computer specialist and towards the end of his life – President of FIDE! The Dutchman was not really regarded as a professional chess player, but he had a splendid grasp of the nuances of the ancient game. He was a fervent follower of Steinitz's positional teaching, as well as a prominent chess writer, teacher and methodologist.

In his best years Dr Euwe did a great deal of fruitful work on chess, deeply studying the problems of the transition from opening to middlegame and working on endgame theory. But the strongest side of his game was his splendid combinative vision. As Alekhine keenly observed, he was able to refute incorrect combinations by his opponents, since by origin his chess talent was purely tactical: 'He is a tactician, who has decided at any cost to make himself a good strategist... Euwe believes perhaps too implicitly in the invariability of rules.' Hence the certain directness of his style: when he held the initiative he only ever went forward.

He was the first to begin preparing professionally for world championship matches, devoting due attention to physical, practical and theoretical preparation (later Botvinnik was to create an entire system on this basis). In his battles with Alekhine, with the tenacity of a scientist he sought and found for himself an opening repertoire which enabled him to neutralise at the board the superior chess qualities of the Russian genius. If we add to this Euwe's precise calculation, feeling for the initiative and outstanding psychological stability, it will become clear why he was always such an uncomfortable opponent for Alekhine.

Euwe held the crown for only two years (1935-37), and someone once christened him 'king for a day', in view of Alekhine's indifferent form. However, in this question I am fully in agreement with Smyslov: 'Nothing accidental happens in life: whatever form Alekhine was in then, a match against him could be won only by a master of the highest class. Euwe played better and he rightly became champion.'

He did not believe in either the drawing or the computer death of chess, and in the early 1970s he asserted: 'Recent battles between different styles show that chess is not exhausted and continues to remain a lively, dynamic and eternally developing game. It is so rich that it will exist for another thousand years!'

Emergence

Euwe was born at the dawn of the 20th century in Amsterdam, into the modest family of a school teacher, in which there were six children. His parents enthusiastically played chess with each other, and the children learned to move the pieces virtually when they were still in nappies. The second son, Max, proved to be the most capable: at the age of four he was sitting at the board and soon was already beating the adults. When he was 12 Max was admitted to the Amsterdam Chess Club. His childhood impressions were of a simultaneous display by the famous American champion Marshall, the first win in his life over a master – in a simultaneous display with te Kolsté, and exciting events at the St Petersburg 1914 super-tournament.

Regularly playing in tournaments, by the age of 15 Max had qualified for the 'B' group of the championship of the country and won the first prize in his career – 25 guilders. A big role in his chess emergence was played by his constant association with the outstanding masters who were then living in Holland: Réti, Tartakower, Tarrasch, Maróczy... For Euwe the last of these always remained a teacher and an old friend.

After finishing school in 1918 Max entered the Maths Faculty of Amsterdam University and studied under the best Dutch mathematicians of those times. Not surprisingly, he chose a scientific career, although he continued playing in chess competitions, steadily improving his mastery of the game. His foreign debut brought him fourth place in a subsidiary tournament in Hastings 1919 and something of a reputation thanks to a spectacular win over O'Hanlon in the Møller Attack.

In February 1920 he had the good fortune to do battle three times with the world champion Lasker, who was giving a series of simultaneous displays in Holland. The young player won individually, then in a consultation game, and he almost won again in a third display. Lasker spoke highly of the talented Dutchman's play, but then... gained full 'revenge' in Mährisch Ostrau 1923, Zürich 1934 (*Volume 1, Game No.73*) and Nottingham 1936.

In the spring of the same year, in a small international tournament in Amsterdam, Euwe played one to one with grandmasters: 1. Réti – 4½ out of 6; 2-3. Maróczy and Tartakower – 4; 4. Euwe – 3½ etc. Then Réti played a match of four games (3-1) with Euwe, winning the first two in 22 and 17 moves, each time sacrificing both rooks – the second game was even called the 'little immortal' by Tartakower!

However, in the third game the student 'showed his teeth' and daringly disposed of the legend of hypermodernism, employing the favourite avant-garde method of his opponent – the double fianchetto.

Game 1

M.Euwe-R.Réti

Amsterdam 3rd matchgame 1920
Caro-Kann Defence B10

1 e4 c6 2 b3?! (original, but ineffective) **2...d5 3 exd5**

In later games a gambit was tried: 3 ♗b2 (3 e5 ♗f5!) 3...dxe4 4 ♘c3 (or 4 ♘e2 ♗f5 5 ♘g3 e6!) 4...♘f6 5 ♘ge2 ♗f5 6 ♘g3 e6! 7 ♕e2, and here, apart from the modest 7...♘bd7 8 ♘cxe4 (Vasyukov-Bronstein, 29th USSR Championship, Baku 1961), also possible is the ambitious 7...♗b4!? 8 0-0-0 ♕a5 (8...♕e7 is level) or immediately 7...♕a5!? (Stefansson-Karpov, Reykjavik rapidplay 1994).

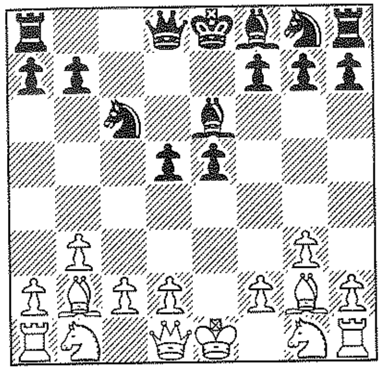
3...cxd5 4 ♗b2 ♘c6 5 g3?!

5 ♘f3 ♗g4 6 ♗e2 with equal chances is more solid, but we must give Euwe's boldness its due: at that time it was not customary to fianchetto the bishops! I would remind you of Capablanca's comment to his San Sebastian game with Janowski (*Volume 1, Game No.77*): 'I saw at the time that 13 g3 seemed the proper continuation, but I became afraid of being criticised for creating such a formation of pawns on the kingside.'

5...e5

More accurate is first 5...♘f6! (5...♗f5 6 ♘f3 is equal, Euwe-Nilsson, Gothenburg 1920) 6 ♗g2 ♗g4 with an excellent game. 'If Black manages to hold in the centre, he will be better, of course.' (Euwe) Alas, Réti did not manage to...

6 ♗g2 ♗e6?! (an unfortunate arrangement of the pieces – 6...♘f6! is much better)



7 ♕e2! ♕c7 8 ♘f3

'Also threatening ♘g5; note that virtually all Black's moves are forced, and that he will soon lag in development because of his attempts to maintain his centre.' (Euwe)

8...f6

After the 'active' 8...e4?! 9 ♘g5 ♘b4 Black comes under a dangerous attack: 10 ♘a3 (10 0-0!? ♕xc2 11 ♘xe6 fxe6 12 ♕h5+ is also unpleasant) 10...♘xc2+ (10...♘f6 11 f3!) 11 ♘xc2 ♕xc2 12 ♗c3! ♘f6 (12...a6 or 12...♗d7 – 13 ♘xe4!; 12...♕d3 13 ♕h5!) 13 ♕b5+ ♗d7 14 ♕xb7 etc.

9 0-0 ♗d6 10 ♘c3 a6 11 d4!

An undermining of the centre, anticipating the similar 'compressed spring' action in the well-known game Réti-Yates from New York 1924 (cf. *Volume 1, Game No.98*, the note to White's eighth move).

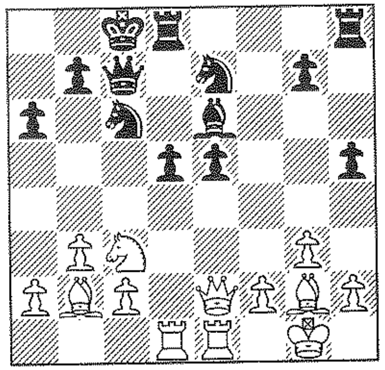
11...♘ge7 (not 11...e4? because of 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 ♕xe4 and d4-d5, while if 13...♕e7, then 14 ♖ae1 wins) **12 dxe5 ♗xe5**

If 12...fxe5 there follows 13 ♘g5.

13 ♘xe5 fxe5 (13...♕xe5? 14 ♖fe1!) **14 ♖ad1 0-0-0 15 ♖fe1**

White has obtained that piece pressure on the centre with the help of his fianchettoed bishops, about which he has been dreaming. 15 f4?! e4 is inaccurate.

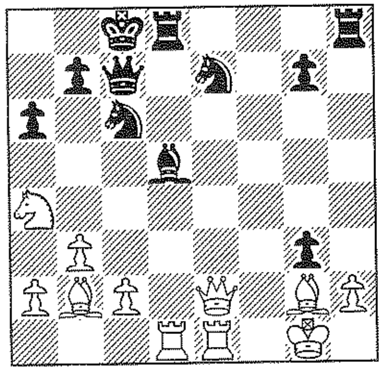
15...h5!? (a desperate attempt at a counterattack)



16 ♘a4! (with the threat of ♗xe5) **16...e4 17 f3! h4 18 fxe4 hxg3?**

The decisive mistake. After 18...d4 19 ♘c5 ♕d6 20 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 Black would have had some compensation for the pawn, but now he loses a piece.

19 exd5 ♗xd5 (or 19...gxh2+ 20 ♔h1 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5)



20 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 (also bad is 20...♖xd5 21 ♕e6+ ♔b8 22 ♖xd5) **21 ♕e6+ ♔b8**

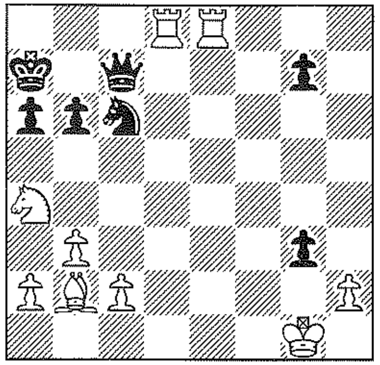
Of course, not 21...♕d7? 22 ♕xd7+ ♖xd7 23 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 24 ♘b6+ and ♘xd5.

22 ♖xd5 ♖de8

'Giving two rooks for the queen; this is probably Black's best option, as it keeps all kinds of perpetual checks in the position.' (Euwe)

23 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8 24 ♖xe8+ ♔a7 25 ♖dd8! b6

If 25...♘xd8, then 26 ♗d4+ ♔a8 27 ♘b6+ ♔b8 28 ♗e5 wins.



26 ♗a3! gxh2+ 27 ♔h1 ♕f7

Euwe considered 27...a5 to be more tenacious, with the following variations after 28 ♘c3!:

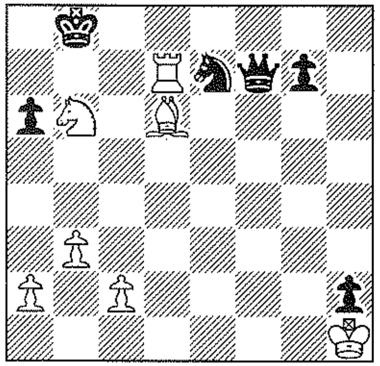
1) 28...♕f7(28...♕b7 29 ♘b5+ and ♘d6) 29 ♘b5+ ♔a6 30 ♖a8+ ♔xb5 31 c4+;

2) 28...♕g3(f4) 29 ♖d7+ ♔a6 30 ♖a8+ etc.;

3) 28...♔b7 29 ♘b5 ♕g3(f4) 30 ♖d7+ ♔a6 31 ♖a8+ ♔xb5 32 c4 mate;

4) 28...♔a6 29 ♖a8+ ♔b7 30 ♖a7+!! ♘xa7 31 ♖c7 and wins.

28 ♖e7+! ♘xe7 29 ♖d7+ ♔a8 30 ♘xb6+ ♔b8 31 ♗d6 mate



A good, fighting and fully hypermodern game! The young master competently pressed in the centre and, when it was required, he also rose to the occasion in the tactical complications.

Early in 1921 Euwe passed his master's exam in mathematics and, before concerning himself seriously with science, he decided to devote himself wholeheartedly to chess for a while. Caissa showed her gratitude with the first title of Dutch Champion, a 6-6 tie in a match with Maróczy (+2 -2 =8) and an honourable 50% score in a strong tournament in Budapest.

There Max drew with the winner, the rapidly improving Alekhine, and scored a fine and crushing win over the future challenger to the throne, Bogoljubow, in a fashionable variation of the French Defence.

Game 2
M.Euwe-E.Bogoljubow
Budapest 1921
French Defence C12

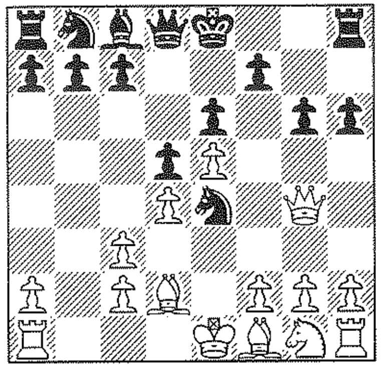
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗b4 5 e5 h6 6 ♗d2!

The main line of the McCutcheon counterattack. 6 exf6 is too double-edged (*Volume 1, Game No.113*).

6...♗xc3 7 bxc3 ♘e4 8 ♕g4 g6

After 8...♔f8 the Dutch player also attacked with 9 h4!? ♘xd2 10 ♔xd2 c5 11 ♖h3 in the game Euwe-Bodin, Amsterdam 1920, and suggested 9...f5, although after 10 exf6 ♕xf6 11 ♘f3 ♘c6 12 ♕f4 ♘xd2 13 ♕xd2 e5 14 0-0-0 White has some initiative.

More interesting is 9...c5 10 ♗d3 ♘xd2 11 ♔xd2, transposing into the topical variation 9 ♗d3 ♘xd2 10 ♔xd2 c5 (after 10...♕g5+ 11 ♕xg5 hxg5 Black has a slightly inferior endgame) 11 h4 ♘c6 (11...c4!?) 12 ♖h3 (12 ♘f3 c4!? 13 ♗e2 b5 J.Polgar-Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 2000) 12...c4!? 13 ♗f1! (after 13 ♗e2 ♖g8 – 13...b5!? – 14 ♕f4 ♗d7 15 ♗h5 ♗e8 16 ♘e2 f5! Black had equal chances in Anand-Korchnoi, Dos Hermanas 1999) 13...b5 14 ♘e2 a5 15 a3 ♗d7 16 ♘f4 with complicated play in the games Leko-Korchnoi and Lutz-Korchnoi (Essen 2002).



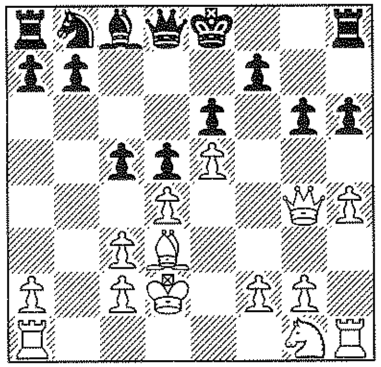
9 h4!?

With the pawn on g6 the main continuation later became 9 ♗d3! ♘xd2 10 ♔xd2 c5 (10...♕g5+? 11 ♕xg5 hxg5 12 g4! with the threat of ♘f3xg5) 11 ♘f3 ♗d7!? (or 11...♘c6 12 ♕f4 Fischer-Rossolimo, USA Championship 1965/66) 12 dxc5 ♕e7 13 ♖ab1 ♗c6 14 ♘d4 ♘d7 15 ♖he1 ♘xc5 16 ♖e3 with a tiny edge (Anand-Radjabov, Wijk aan Zee 2003).

9...c5 (if 9...h5 then 10 ♕f4) **10 ♗d3**

White has also tried 10 h5 g5 11 ♗d3 (11 f4 f5 12 exf6 e5!) 11...♘xd2 12 ♔xd2 ♘c6 13 ♘f3 c4 (13...♕a5!?) 14 ♗e2 f5! 15 exf6 e5 16 ♕g3 exd4 with sharp play.

10...♘xd2 (10...♗d7!?) **11 ♔xd2**



Threatening the patent 'Euwe attack' – ♖h3! and ♗xg6!

11...♘c6

An attempt to improve on the variation 11...c4?! (here this is worse than after 8...♔f8: White has a target on g6) 12 ♗e2 ♘c6 (12...♗d7 13 h5!) 13 f4 h5 14 ♕g5 ♕a5 15 ♘f3 ♕a3 16 ♕f6 ♖f8 17 ♖hb1! with advantage to White (Maróczy-Spielmann, Berlin 1920). Or 12...h5 13 ♕f4 ♘c6 14 ♘f3 ♕e7 15 ♘g5 b5 16 a3 a5 17 g4 ♖a7 18 gxh5 gxh5 19 ♖h3! (Bogoljubow-Réti, Breslau 1925).

Also in fashion then was 11...♕a5 12 ♖h3 (12 h5 g5 13 f4 cxd4!) 12...cxd4! (12...♖g8; 12...♖f8) 13 ♗xg6!, for example:

1) 13...dxc3+ 14 ♔d1 ♕c7?! (14...♖f8! 15 ♖f3 ♕c5 16 ♗h5 ♘c6 is equal) 15 ♖f3 ♖g8 16 ♕a4+ ♗d7? (16...♔d8 17 ♗xf7 ♖f8 is more tenacious) 17 ♗xf7+ (17 ♕f4!?) 17...♔d8 18 ♕a3 ♕c4? (18...♖h8) 19 ♘e2 ♗b5 20 ♘xc3 ♖h8 21 ♕a5+ 1-0 (Euwe-te Kolsté, Nijmegen 1921);

2) 13...♕c7 14 ♖f3 ♖g8 15 ♖xf7 ♕xc3+ 16 ♔e2 d3+ (16...♕xc2+!? 17 ♗xc2 ♖xg4) 17 cxd3 ♕xe5+ 18 ♔f3 ♖f8? (18...♕xa1? 19 ♖g7+ ♔f8 20 ♕f4+!, but 18...♘c6! 19 ♘e2! ♔d8 20 h5 ♕h2 21 d4 e5 22 ♕g3 ♕xg3 23 ♔xg3 ♗d7 would have retained chances of equalising) 19 ♖f5+ ♔d7 20 ♖xf8 ♕xa1 21 ♖f7+ ♔d8 22 ♕b4 ♘d7 23 ♕d6 ♕h8 24 ♘e2 e5 25 ♘f4! exf4 26 ♗f5 ♕e8 27 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 28 ♖f8 1-0 (Euwe-Maróczy, Bad Aussee 6th matchgame 1921).

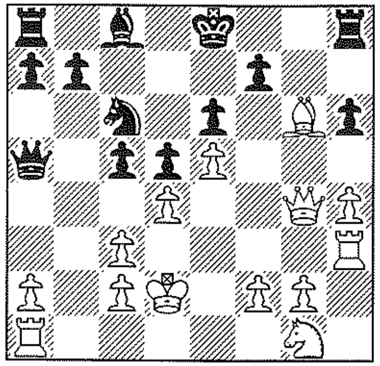
Later 11...h5 was also played, and at present a different defensive construction is being tried – 11...♗d7 12 h5 g5 13 f4 ♘c6 (13...c4!? 14 ♗e2 f5 15 exf6 e5) 14 fxg5 ♕xg5+ (14...♕a5!?) 15 ♕xg5 hxg5 16 ♔e3 g4 17 ♖f1 ♔e7 18 ♖h4 ♖ag8 (Leko-Short, Batumi 1999).

12 ♖h3!? (12 ♕f4 or 12 ♘f3 was more cautious) **12...♕a5!?**

Into the storm! However, it is more solid to play 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗d7 14 c3 (but not 14 ♗xg6?! ♕a5+ 15 c3 fxg6 16 ♕xg6+ ♔d8) 14...♕e7 with equality (Capablanca-Torre, Moscow 1925) or 13...♕b6!? 14 ♘f3 (White is forced to block off his rook: 14 ♘e2? ♕b4+ 15 ♔d1 ♘xe5!) 14...♗d7 equalising, as later Euwe, Fischer, and Spassky all realised when playing White...

13 ♗xg6!

A forced move, and moreover it appears even more dangerous for Black here than in the above games with te Kolsté and Maróczy.



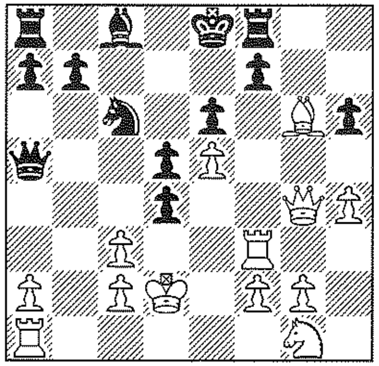
13...♖f8?

'Not 13...fxg6 because of 14 ♕xg6+ ♔d8 15 ♕f6+, nor would 13...cxd4 do because of 14 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 15 ♖f3+ ♔e8 16 ♕g6+ and White wins the exchange in both cases.' (Euwe)

However, more than half a century later the counter-blow 13...♘xd4! was discovered. Unfavourable now is 14 ♘e2?! (14 ♗h5 ♗d7!) 14...♖g8! 15 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 16 ♕h5+ ♔e7 or 16 ♕f4+ ♔e8. Also after 14 ♖g3 ♖f8 15 ♗h7 (15 ♗d3!?) 15...♗d7 16 ♕f4 0-0-0 17 ♕xh6 ♗b5 18 ♕e3 ♗c4 Black has excellent counterplay: 19 ♖g7?! ♘c6 20 g4 d4 21 ♕g3 dxc3+ 22 ♔e1 ♕b4! (Harding). True, 14 ♔d1! ♖g8! (inferior is 14...♕b5?! 15 cxd4 ♕f1+ 16 ♔d2 ♕xa1 17 ♘e2 or 14...♘f5?! 15 ♗xf5 exf5 16 ♕g7 ♖f8 17 ♘e2) 15 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 16 ♕h5+ ♔e7 17 cxd4 ♖xg2 18 ♘e2 maintains approximate equality.

14 ♖f3! cxd4?!

After this Black's position collapses, as also after 14...♔e7?! 15 ♕f4! But in the event of 14...♘xd4 White would still have had to make the correct choice from three tempting continuations: 15 ♖xf7?! ♖xf7 16 ♕h5 is unclear on account of 16...♘b5 17 ♗xf7+ ♔e7 18 ♘e2 ♘xc3! 19 ♘xc3 d4, as is 15 ♖f6?! in view of 15...♗d7! 16 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 17 ♕g7 ♔c7, and only 15 ♗xf7+! ♔e7 16 ♗h5! consolidates the advantage – 16...♘xf3+ 17 ♘xf3 ♔d8 18 ♕g7 ♖f4 (18...♖f5 19 ♗g6!) 19 ♕xh6 ♕a4 20 ♕g5+ ♔c7 21 ♗e8 ♗d7 22 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 23 ♕g7+ ♔c6 24 ♕e7 (Nikitin).



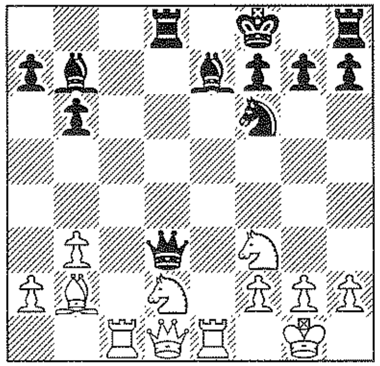
15 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 16 ♕g7 dxc3+ 17 ♔e1 ♕b4 18 ♗g6 ♖xf3 19 ♘xf3 ♕f4 20 ♖d1 ♖b8 21 ♕f6+! (in the endgame the outcome is decided by the kingside pawns) **21...♕xf6 22 exf6 ♗d7 23 g4 ♔c7 24 g5 ♖h8 25 ♗d3 hxg5 26 hxg5 e5 27 g6 ♗e6 28 ♘g5 ♘d4 29 ♘h7 ♘f3+ 30 ♔e2 e4 31 f7 ♘d4+ 32 ♔e3 ♘f5+ 33 ♔f4 ♘e7** (33...exd3 34 f8♕ ♖xf8 35 ♘xf8 dxc2 36 ♘xe6+ ♔d6 37 ♖e1 wins for White) **34 g7!** (avoiding the little trap 34 f8♕? ♘xg6+) **34...♖xh7 35 f8♕ 1-0**

However, Euwe then became tired and he ended the year with a failure at a tournament in The Hague. After this he gave some thought to what to do with his life (chess did not provide an income), switched to mathematics and soon, after passing his exams, received his high school teaching diploma and began working for a doctor's degree.

Nevertheless, in this period he took part, although without success, in a number of grandmaster tournaments: a share of 9th-11th places in Pistyan 1922 (1. Bogoljubow; 2-3. Alekhine and Spielmann), 11th place in London 1922 (1. Capablanca; 2. Alekhine), and a share of 5th-6th places in Mährisch Ostrau (1. Lasker; 2. Réti). Some consolation for the Dutchman was provided by the experience he had acquired, first prize in Hastings 1923/24 and a second victory in the championship of his country.

Euwe usually dealt very confidently with opponents of a slightly lower standard. In the following game his opponent played the opening weakly and lost the right to castle. The punishment was decisive and merciless.

Game 3
M.Euwe-A.Speyer
Dutch Championship, Amsterdam 1924



18 ♖xe7!

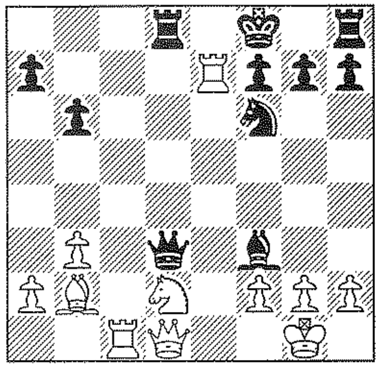
It is interesting to know whether or not the prosaic 18 ♖c7!? also wins. Black is forced to play 18...♗xf3, after which White has two replies:

1) 19 ♕xf3 ♕xd2 20 ♗c3 ♕d6 21 ♖cxe7 ♕xe7 22 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 23 g4 with a strong initiative, which provides a win after 23...h6 24 ♗b4+ ♔e8 25 ♕c6+ ♖d7 26 ♕c8+ ♖d8 27 ♕c7 ♘d7 28 ♕c6 ♖b8 29 ♗d6 ♖d8 30 ♕e4+;

2) 19 ♖exe7!? ♗xd1 20 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 21 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 22 ♗a3+!, and bad is 22...♖d6? 23 ♘c4 ♘e4 24 ♖gd7! (or 24 ♘xd6!? ♘xd6 25 ♖gd7! and wins) 24...♗h5 (24...♔e8 25 ♘xd6+ ♘xd6 26 ♖xd6 ♕e2 27 ♖c8+ ♔f7 28 ♖d7+ ♔g6 29 ♖c6+, picking up the queen at the least) 25 ♖d8+ ♗e8 26 h3!! ♕d1+ 27 ♔h2 ♕c2 28 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 29 ♘xd6+ ♘xd6 30 ♖xc2 and wins. However, after 22...♕d6! 23 ♗xd6+ ♖xd6 24 ♘c4 ♖e6 25 ♖gf7+ ♔e8 26 ♘e3 ♖g8! 27 ♖xa7 ♗f3 28 h4 ♗c6 29 ♖fc7 ♔d8 the outcome is not so clear.

It follows that Euwe's spectacular combination was the shortest way to the goal.

18...♗xf3 (18...♔xe7 19 ♗a3+ ♔e8 20 ♕e1+ ♘e4 21 ♖c7 is also hopeless)

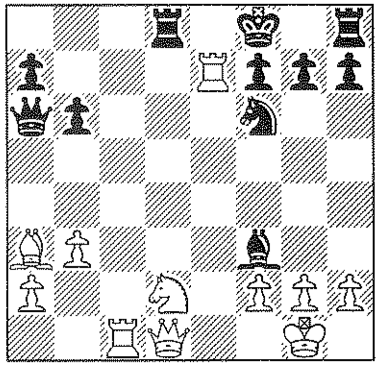


19 ♗a3!!

This is the whole point: a classic ambush with the threat of a discovered check.

19...♕a6

If 19...♗xd1, then 20 ♖e3+ ♕d6 (20...♔g8 21 ♖xd3 winning a piece) 21 ♗xd6+ ♔g8 22 ♗e7 etc.



20 ♖cc7! ♕xa3 (20...♗xd1 21 ♖xf7+ and mate) **21 ♖xf7+ ♔e8 22 ♕e1+ 1-0**

A nice clean win!

Thus chess and mathematics went hand in hand, but the latter clearly prevailed, since the young master, who was preparing to become a doctor of sciences, missed the strongest tournaments of that time: Baden-Baden 1925, Moscow 1925, Semmering 1926...

From Amateur to Challenger

In 1926 Euwe defended his doctor's dissertation, got married and... remembered about chess. The Amsterdam club for which Euwe played decided to arrange a match of 10 games for him against one of the leading grandmasters in the world. Negotiations were held with both Lasker and Bogoljubow, but an agreement was reached with Alekhine, who was then preparing for his battle with Capablanca.

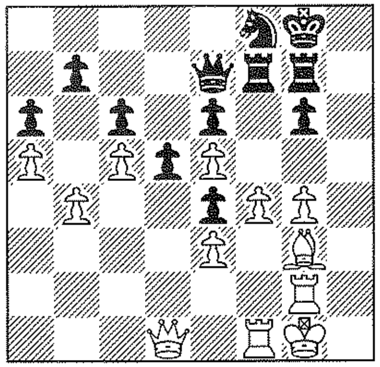
This 'training' match with Alekhine (Holland 1926/27) became a turning point in Euwe's chess career. Before the start he announced that he would regard a defeat 'at the hands of his mighty opponent' with a score of 2½-7½ as normal. It simply seemed impossible to him that Alekhine could let mistakes go unpunished or even that he was capable of failing to make the best moves. It goes without saying that the Russian grandmaster immediately seized the lead: 2½-½.

'The impression created by these games was depressing,' remembered Euwe. 'To continue the struggle seemed pointless... Nevertheless I decided to seek a way of scoring as many points as possible... In the fourth game I played in waiting style and after interesting complications I successfully gained a draw. And in the fifth game an opportunity presented itself for me to radically review my style of play. In an almost symmetric position Alekhine strove to gain an advantage at any price, but he did not know with what to begin. The position remained closed, and without particular risk I was able to imitate the preparation of operations first on the queenside, and then on the kingside. Alekhine could not endure this, and he lost his bearings – my rushing from flank to flank had unsettled him.'

Game 4

A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

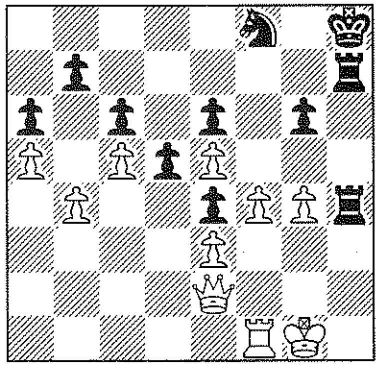
Amsterdam 5th matchgame 1926/27



36...♔h8!

'I have to admit that I did not calculate the consequences of this move, but neither did Alekhine... He decided that I had committed a blunder, and he replied almost without thinking.' (Euwe)

37 ♗h4?! (forcing Black to give up his queen) **37...♕xh4! 38 ♖h2 ♖h7 39 ♖xh4 ♖xh4 40 ♕e2 ♖fh7**



The time control has been reached, and...

41 ♕g2?

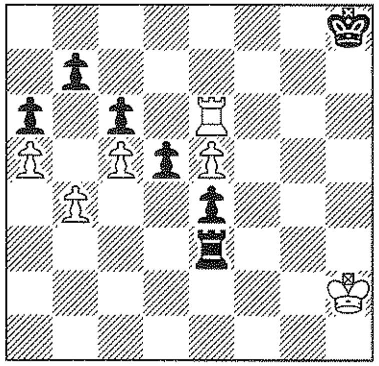
Correct was 41 ♖f2 with a draw, since Black has only checks with his rooks. But what is the source of this mistake, made after the time scramble? 'It seems to me,' writes Euwe, 'that it was provoked by the psychological effect of my strange play. Alekhine was unable to understand hardly a single move of mine and he did not know that, essentially, I was playing without any plan.'

41...♖h3! (here the game was adjourned – as it transpired, in a position that was now lost for White!) **42 f5**

The only chance. After 42 ♖e1 ♖f3 43 ♕e2 g5!? the knight comes into play via g6 (and if 44 f5, then 44...♖h4 or 44...♖hh3).

42...gxf5 43 gxf5 ♖g7 44 fxe6 ♘xe6 45 ♖f6 ♖hg3 46 ♕xg3 ♖xg3+ 47 ♔h2 ♖xe3 48 ♖xe6

Euwe was convinced that this rook endgame, reached by force, was hopeless for White, and so he hardly analysed it at home. This was a mistake!



48...d4?

'The punishment was not long in coming.' (Euwe) The e4-pawn should have been advanced immediately – 48...♖f3, and there is no way of saving the game: 49 ♖c7 e3!, 49 ♖g6 e3! 50 ♖g1 ♖f5 51 ♖e1 d4 or 49 ♔g2 ♖f5! 50 ♖e8+ ♔g7 51 e6 e3 and Black wins.

49 ♖g6 ½-½

With his king cut off, Black cannot win. For example: 49...♔h7 50 ♖g2 ♖f3 51 ♖g4! d3 52 ♖xe4 ♔g7 53 ♔g2 ♖f5 54 ♖d4.

An invaluable lesson for the future contender to the throne! After also drawing the sixth game, he congratulated himself on acquiring 'a new method of play that made Alekhine's energetic actions impossible'. However, in the seventh game Max ended up in a very difficult position, but then with a pawn sacrifice he parried the direct attack and, in his opponent's time-trouble, employed a cunning psychological ploy: with almost half an hour on his clock... he also ran into time-trouble, but calculated the sharpest continuation! In a time scramble with errors by both sides Alekhine made the last mistake, and Euwe gained his first win in the match.

Alekhine's temporary departure on some urgent matters to Paris (where there was an exchange of telegrams with New York and Capablanca) allowed the Dutchman to prepare properly for the eighth game, which overturned all the pre-match forecasts.

Game 5

A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

Amsterdam 8th matchgame 1926/27

Réti Opening A09

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 d4

Rubinstein's recommendation (Lasker preferred 2...c6 – *Volume 1, Game Nos.71 and 108*). It is appropriate to recall the classic duel Réti-Rubinstein (Carlsbad 1923): 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 c4 d4 5 d3 ♗g7 6 b4! 0-0 7 ♘bd2! c5 8 ♘b3 cxb4 9 ♗b2! ♘c6 10 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b6 12 a3! etc. (*Volume 1, Game No.96*).

3 b4

Later Alekhine played differently against Euwe (Holland 22nd matchgame 1937): 3 e3 ♘c6 (if 3...c5, then now 4 b4! f6 5 exd4 cxd4 6 c5) 4 exd4 ♘xd4 5 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 6 ♘c3 (*Volume 1, Game No.146*). Also no less popular is 3 g3.

3...g6

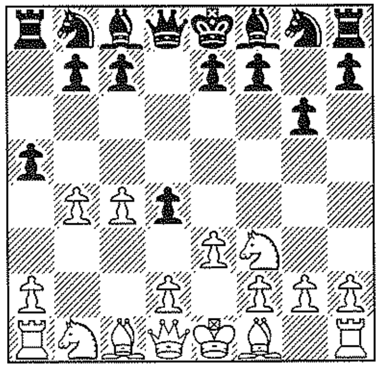
After 3...c5 Réti also used to break up Black's centre with 4 e3!? Therefore Alekhine suggested 3...f6! 4 e3 e5, when 5 exd4? is weak in view of 5...e4! Incorrect is 5 ♘xe5?! fxe5 6 ♕h5+ ♔e7 7 ♕xe5+ ♗e6, then ...♔f7 and ...♘f6, while if 5 ♗b2 or 5 a3, then 5...c5! is good. The newest try is 5 c5!? d3 (5...a5!?) 6 ♕b3 e4 7 ♘d4 a5 with complicated play (Gabriel-Korchnoi, Zürich 1999).

Even so, nowadays 3 b4 is rarely played, precisely because of 3...f6!: Black succeeds in creating a strong centre.

4 e3 (4 ♗b2!?) **4...a5?!**

Black does not gain full equality by 4...dxe3 5 fxe3 or 4...♗g7 5 exd4 ♘c6 (5...♗xd4 6 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 7 ♘c3) 6 ♗e2 ♘xd4 7 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗f3 e5 11 ♗a3 (Alekhine-Phillips, New York simultaneous 1929).

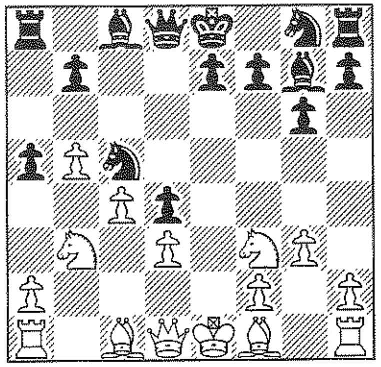
Euwe thought that White also stood better after 4...e5 5 exd4 (5 ♗b2 ♗g7 is unclear) 5...exd4 6 ♕e2+ ♕e7 (6...♗e6?! 7 ♕e5) 7 ♗b2, but later it transpired that after 5...e4! 6 ♕e2 (6 ♘g1?! ♕xd4) 6...♕e7 7 ♘e5 f6 8 ♘g4 ♘c6 Black regains the pawn with a good position.



5 b5 c5 6 exd4 ♗g7 7 d3 cxd4

Of course, the line 7...♗xd4? 8 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 9 ♕c2! will not do, since 9...♕xa1? leads to the loss of the queen: 10 ♗b2 ♕xa2 11 ♘c3.

8 g3 ♘d7 9 ♘bd2! (but not 9 ♗g2?! ♘c5 and ...♗f5) **9...♘c5 10 ♘b3**

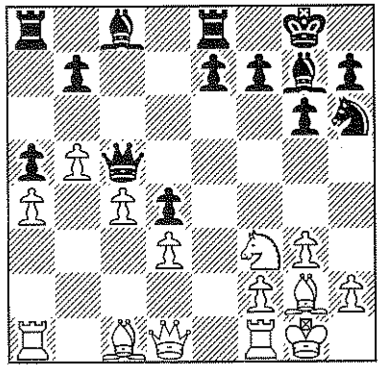


10...♕b6

Against the seemingly tempting 10...♘a4?! there is the simple 11 ♕c2!, and after 11...♘c3? 12 ♘bxd4 ♗xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 14 ♗b2 ♕e5+ 15 ♔d2 White regains the piece with an obvious advantage.

Let us take stock of the opening. 'Alekhine chose an unfortunate scheme of development and by the 10th move he was already in a strategically lost position. White's pawn majority on the queenside, supported by his g2-bishop, creates a constant threat to Black.' (Euwe) In other words – a very good version of the Modern Benoni with reversed colours.

11 ♘xc5 (of course, not 11 ♘bxd4? ♘e6) **11...♕xc5 12 ♗g2 ♘h6 13 0-0 0-0 14 a4!** (otherwise ...a5-a4) **14...♖e8**



'14...♕h5 would have been inferior, for then White could have forced an ending which would have been quite favourable for him, thus: 15 ♘g5 ♗g4 16 f3 ♗d7 17 g4 ♕h4 18 ♕e1. And, in addition, Black's knight would be decidedly out of play.' (Euwe)

15 ♖e1 ♗f5 (15...♕h5?! 16 ♖e4!) **16 ♗a3 ♕c7 17 c5 ♖ad8** (or 17...♗e6 18 ♘g5!) **18 ♘g5 ♗f6**

If 18...♘g4 there would have followed 19 ♕b3, so Black first drives back the knight.

19 ♘e4 ♗g7 20 ♕d2 ♘g4 21 b6 (the start of a thematic breakthrough) **21...♕c8**

Totally bad was 21...♕d7? (21...♕c6?? 22 ♘d6!) 22 c6 bxc6 23 ♘c5 winning.

22 c6! (the greedy 22 ♕xa5?! would have allowed Black both a defence, and counterplay, after 22...♘e5) **22...bxc6**

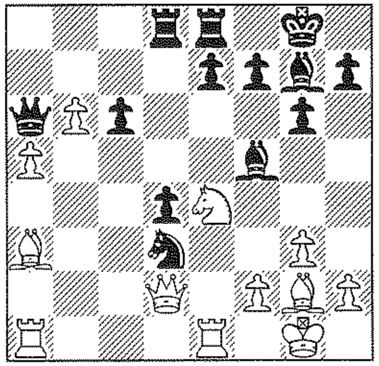
Or 22...♕xc6 23 ♘d6 ♕xb6 24 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♖ab1 ♕a6 26 ♖xb7 and White is the exchange up.

23 ♕xa5 ♘e5 24 ♕d2 ♕a6

'Any action on the kingside would be futile: if 24...♗h3 25 ♗h1, while 24...♗g4 is refuted by 25 f4 ♘f3+ 26 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 27 ♘c5.' (Euwe)

25 a5 ♘xd3

If 25...♕xd3 26 ♕xd3 ♘xd3 Euwe gives 27 a6?! ♘xe1 28 ♖xe1 'and White's pawns speedily decide the issue'. But after 28...d3! 29 b7 ♗d4 the position is unclear. Therefore I would have played simply 27 ♖ed1! ♘e5 28 a6 etc.



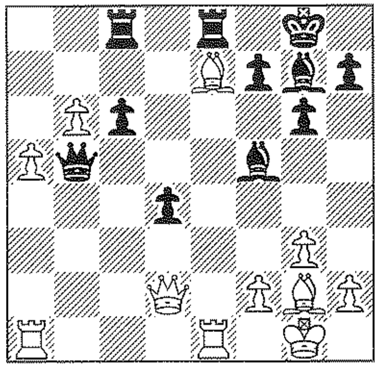
26 ♘c5!

The only move that retains the advantage. 26 ♗f1? ♘xe1! 27 ♗xa6 ♘f3+ was incorrect and 26 ♕e2?! c5 or 26 ♖ed1?! ♗xe4! 27 ♗xe4 ♘c5 was also dubious.

26...♘xc5 27 ♗xc5 ♕b5?

'There was a better defence in 27...d3 28 ♖ac1 ♕b7. 28 ♖a3 is possibly stronger.' (Euwe) However, the computer does not confirm this: 28...♕b5! 29 ♗e3 (29 ♗xe7? ♖xe7 30 ♖xe7 ♗f8) 29...c5 with sharp play. On the other hand, after 28 ♖ac1 ♕b7 White has 29 a6! ♕xa6 30 ♗xc6 with chances of success.

28 ♗xe7 (restoring material equality with gain of tempo) **28...♖c8**



29 ♗f1! (the decisive manoeuvre: now the pawns are irresistible) **29...♕b3**

Even worse was 29...d3 30 ♖ab1 and after the queen moves – 31 b7 ♖b8 32 ♗d6.

30 ♖a3 ♕d5 31 b7 ♖b8 32 a6 ♗c8 (there is nothing better) **33 bxc8♕ ♖bxc8 34 ♗g2 ♕d7 35 ♗c5 ♖xe1+ 36 ♕xe1 h5 37 a7 ♖a8 38 ♕e4 d3 39 ♖xd3 ♕b7 40 ♕xc6 ♕b1+ 41 ♗f1 ♖xa7 42 ♗xa7 1-0**

The scores became equal: 4-4. The ninth game was a fighting draw, and before the 10th, in the spirit of ancient chivalry traditions, Alekhine menacingly informed Euwe that he would stake everything on winning! Indeed, with Black he took an enormous strategic risk, ended up in a difficult position, but managed to confuse his draw-minded opponent and win the game, and with it the match: 5½-4½ (+3 -2 =3).

A more than modest result for the

contender to the throne! 'The reasons for my lack of success were several,' wrote Alekhine years later, 'but the main one was undoubtedly a flippant, unfounded underestimation of my opponent. From this moment there was born a "royal idea" in Euwe himself and his compatriot supporters.' It became clear that in Holland a very strong grandmaster had emerged. An 'Euwe committee' also emerged there, and for the next 14 years a number of splendid encounters between the Dutch Champion and the world elite were staged...

Naturally, Euwe was happy with the match: 'It was not only that for the first time since 1923 I was meeting a player of the highest class. Also important was the fact that I tested myself in "psychological chess". It seems to me that meetings between top-class masters always proceed under the influence of these psychological factors. Chess is continuing to proceed in completely new ways!'

Also interesting were the conclusions of Tartakower: 'For the young Dutchman Max Euwe, whose play is full of *healthy fantasy*, one could have forecast the most brilliant future in chess, but he has preferred one in his specific profession, as a mathematics teacher. The chess achievements that he is capable of, despite the diversion of his strength, have been shown by his match with Alekhine, the outcome of which was unclear until the last few moves of the final, 10th game! It is interesting that in their notes both players consider this struggle not from the viewpoint of theoretical knowledge or combinative miracles, but as a series of psychological duels, where all the time they were seeking weak aspects in the opponent's play (Alekhine's time-trouble in the seventh game, his antipathy to the dull "stonewall" in the fifth, and, by contrast, Euwe's uncertain wanderings in the combinative labyrinths of the 10th game). In fact, if – despite all the achievements of theory and technique – there is something that can remain an eternally young science in chess, it is the *psychology of the struggle*. And, in order to catch the easily escaping thread of victory, it does no harm to remember that it is not the one who plays *well* who wins, but simply the one who plays *better!...*'

Euwe's profession allowed him to play chess only during the school holidays. However, in June 1927 he was unable to travel to the tournament in Kecskemet on account of the birth of the first of his three daughters. But already within a month he was playing for Holland in the 1st World Olympiad in London, where he achieved a good result on board 1 in very distinguished company: Réti – 11½ out of 15; Maróczy – 9 out of 12; Grünfeld – 9½ out of 13; Euwe – 10½ out of 15 (+7 -1 =7). And soon the first of his excellent books was published – *Lessons in Chess*, part of which is known in the Russian translation as *A Course of Chess Lectures*; later he was to produce fundamental works such as *Strategy and Tactics in Chess* (1935) and *Judgement and Planning in Chess* (1952).

After Alekhine's victory over Capablanca, FIDE, for which the conducting of the world championship was an eternally sore point, decided to establish its own champion in a match of 10 games and to declare him the official contender to the throne. The participants in the 'candidates match', held in the spring of 1928 in Holland, were Bogoljubow, the winner of the super-tournament at Moscow 1925, and Euwe, supported by his 'committee'. This was a battle of equals: after a win in the sixth game the Dutchman was a point ahead, but in the end he lost by the minimal score: 4½-5½ (+2 -3 =5). I would remind you that within less than two years Bogoljubow was demolished by Alekhine in a world championship match: 9½-15½.

The 2nd World Olympiad (The Hague, summer 1928) presented an unusual spectacle: by a decision of the FIDE London Congress only amateurs were admitted. The absurdity of dividing chess masters into professionals and amateurs was obvious, and was never repeated. But FIDE nevertheless succeeded in staging an individual tournament 'for the title of world amateur champion': in the absence of the world stars this was convincingly won by Euwe (12 out of 15), second was Przepiórka (11) and third – Mattison (10).

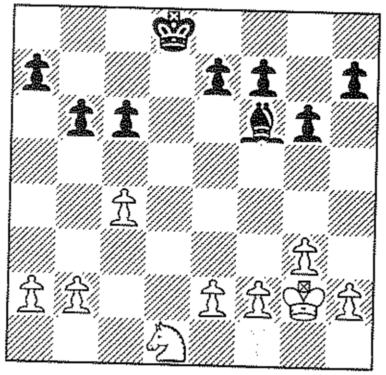
The worth of the amateur title was tested by the Dutchman a couple of weeks later in Bad Kissingen, where of the greats only Alekhine and Lasker were missing: 1. Bogoljubow – 8 out of 11; 2. Capablanca – 7; 3-4. Euwe and Rubinstein – 6½; 5. Nimzowitsch – 6; 6. Réti – 5½ etc. A very good result for the youngest participant, who was also not a professional, wouldn't you agree?

As evidenced by the tournament book, 'the most instructive of the games played in Kissingen' was that between Euwe and Capablanca. Or more precisely, its study-like ending, which, as usual, was annotated in picturesque fashion by Tartakower – according to Lasker's apt definition, 'the Homer of chess'.

Game 6

M.Euwe-J.R.Capablanca

Bad Kissingen 1928, 7th round



18...♔d7 ('the black king becomes the main actor') **19 ♔f3 ♔d6 20 ♔e3**

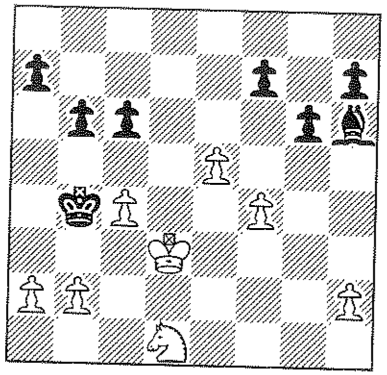
'A race of the kings to White's queenside, which has been undermined by the move c2-c4.'

20...♔c5 21 ♔d3 ♔b4 22 f4

'Better some energy, rather than total passivity (such as 22 f3 ♗g7 23 e3 f5), since in the end White would be threatened with zugzwang.'

22...e5! 23 e4 exf4 24 gxf4 ♗g7! 25 e5 ♗h6

'In this position, reached by truly crystal-clear play, Black must win a pawn in all variations. However, this makes all the more amazing the clever defensive idea, found by the Dutch master.'



26 ♘e3!! ♗xf4 27 ♘c2+ ♔a5 (of course, not 27...♔c5?? 28 b4 mate) **28 ♔e4**

Tartakower attaches two exclamation marks to this move, although 28 ♘d4! is more accurate, restricting the opponent's choice to 28...c5 (28...♗xe5? 29 ♘xc6+; 28...♗xh2?! 29 ♘xc6+ ♔a4 30 ♔e4 and ♘d8!) 29 ♘c6+ ♔a4 (29...♔a6?! 30 ♔e4 ♗g5? 31 ♔d5! and ♔d6-d7) 30 ♔c4 ♗xh2 31 ♘d8! (with the threat of ♘xf7; 31 ♘xa7?! h5 etc. is dangerous) – cf. the note to Black's 29th move.

28...♗xh2 29 ♘d4

'Attacking a whole chain of pawns. Those who think that a bishop is stronger than a knight may observe the opposite in this game.'

29...♔b4

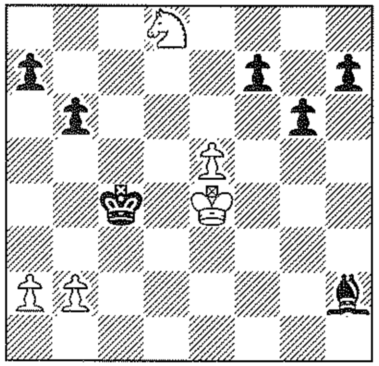
Activating the king. '29...c5 30 ♘c6+ ♔a6 31 ♘d8 would have been much worse.' But in my opinion, 29...c5!? is by no means worse, only after 30 ♘c6+ correct is 30...♔a4! 31 ♘d8! (Euwe could have obtained this position by playing 28 ♘d4) 31...♗xe5! 32 ♔xe5 f5, and the saving path for White is still thorny – 33 ♘c6 (33 ♘e6 ♔b4) 33...a6 34 ♔f6 with the following possible variations:

1) 34...f4 35 ♘e5 ♔b4 36 ♔g5 f3 37 ♔h6 f2 38 ♘d3+ ♔xc4 39 ♘xf2 ♔d4 40 ♔xh7 ♔e3 41 ♘d1+ ♔d3 42 ♘c3 b5 43 ♔xg6 ♔c2 44 a4! b4 45 ♘e4 c4 46 ♘d6 c3 (or 46...♔xb2 47 ♘xc4+ ♔c3 48 ♘e3) 47 bxc3 b3 48 ♘c4 ♔xc3 49 ♘e3 b2 50 ♘d1+ ♔c2 51 ♘xb2 ♔xb2 52 ♔f5 with a draw;

2) 34...b5 35 ♔g7 bxc4 36 ♔xh7 g5 37 ♔g6 g4 38 ♔xf5 g3 39 ♘e5 g2 40 ♘f3 ♔b4 41 ♔f4 c3 42 bxc3+ ♔xc3 43 ♔g3 c4 44 ♔xg2 ♔b2 45 ♘e5 c3 46 ♔f3 c2 47 ♘d3+ ♔xa2 48 ♔e2 again drawing.

30 ♘xc6+ ♔xc4 31 ♘d8!

'Hurrying to exploit his only trump – the advance of the e5-pawn. Important tempi would have been lost by 31 ♘xa7? h5 32 ♘c6 (or 32 ♘c8 ♔c5! 33 ♘d6? f5+) 32...h4, and White is too late.'



31...♗xe5!?

'A counter-blow' – and again two exclamation marks from Tartakower! However, practical chances of success would also have been retained by 31...♔c5 32 ♘xf7 h5 33 e6 ♔c6 34 b4 a6 35 a4 b5 36 axb5+ axb5. The white steed would have had a fair amount of work to do: 37 ♘e5+ ♔d6 38 ♘f3 ♗g3 39 ♘d4 ♗e1 40 ♘xb5+ ♔xe6 41 ♘d4+ ♔d6 42 ♘f5+!, and the position is nevertheless a draw.

32 ♔xe5 ♔d3?!

'Even the great Capablanca proves unequal to the task set him by the mockery of fate. The preparatory 32...f5! would probably have given him a deserved win in the battle of two pawn masses against a knight.'

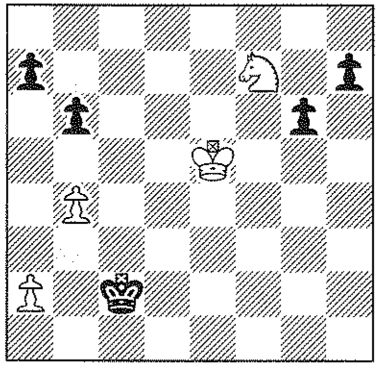
However, I doubt whether after 33 ♘e6! Black has a more promising position than with the c-pawns, examined in the note to Black's 29th move. For example, 33...♔d3 34 ♘f8 ♔c2 35 b4! ♔b2 36 b5 ♔xa2 37 ♘xh7 ♔b3 38 ♘f8 ♔b4 39 ♘xg6 ♔xb5, and here it would appear that a draw can be obtained in two ways:

1) 40 ♔xf5 a5 41 ♔e4 (41 ♘e5? a4 wins for Black) 41...♔c4 (or 41...a4 42 ♔d3) 42 ♔c3 (not 42 ♘e5+? ♔c3) 42...♔c3 43 ♘e7! b5 44 ♘d5+ ♔c4 45 ♘b6+ ♔b3 46 ♔d4!! (but not 46 ♔d2? ♔b2 and wins) 46...a4 47 ♘d7 a3 48 ♘c5+ ♔c2 49 ♘d3 drawing;

2) 40 ♘e7!? (this is possibly stronger) 40...a5 41 ♘xf5 a4 42 ♔d5! (42 ♔d4? ♔b4 43 ♔d3 ♔b3 44 ♘d4+ ♔b2 is bad) 42...a3 43 ♘d4+ ♔a4 44 ♔c4 a2 45 ♘c2 with a draw. But in either case great accuracy would have been demanded of White.

33 ♘xf7 ♔c2 34 b4!

'Deus ex machina' (*that is, in simple terms, a divine salvation – G.K.*). Soon the draw becomes obvious.



34...♔c3

'Black has to run after the escaping pawn, since after 34...♔b2 35 b5! (Nimzowitsch's blockading principle; Capablanca apparently overlooked this idea when he made his 32nd move) 35...♔xa2 36 ♘d6 ♔b3 37 ♘c8 ♔c4 38 ♘xa7 or 34...a6 35 ♔d5! ♔c3 (35...♔b2? 36 a4 ♔b3 37 b5) 36 ♔c6 ♔xb4 37 ♔xb6 a5 38 a3+! ♔xa3 (38...♔a4 39 ♔a6) 39 ♔xa5 ♔b3 40 ♔b5 his last chance of winning would have disappeared.'

35 b5 ♔b4 36 ♘d6 h5 37 ♔f4 ♔c5 38 ♘c8 ♔xb5 39 ♘xa7+ ♔b4 40 ♘c8 b5 41 ♘e7! ♔a3 42 ♘xg6 ♔xa2 43 ♘e5 ½-½

'The white knight performed miracles of bravery.' (Tartakower) 'I have to say, what a knight!' Capablanca exclaimed during analysis after the game.

In the Christmas holidays (Holland 1928/29) Euwe played a return match with Bogoljubow and after a tough fight he lost by the same score 4½-5½ (+1 -2 =7). 'He tries his utmost to be a good strategist,' Alekhine wrote about the Dutch grandmaster, 'but, willingly or not, he has to reconcile himself to the fact that he has to deal with tactics. There is no way that his desires and opportunities can exist peacefully in him.'

In the summer of 1929, after easily winning his third championship of the country (8½ out of 9), Euwe set off to Carlsbad, to one of the major tournaments of that era. Here Capablanca, aiming to confirm his right to a return match with Alekhine, was especially eager for victory. But things turned out differently: 1. Nimzowitsch – 15 out of 21; 2-3. Capablanca and Spielmann – 14½; 4. Rubinstein – 13½; 5-7. Becker, Euwe and Vidmar – 12; 8. Bogoljubow – 11½; 9. Grünfeld – 11 etc.

Alekhine, who was present at the tournament in the capacity of correspondent for the *New York Times*, remarked that the talented, serious Euwe was prevented from occupying a higher place only by his lack of experience: the Dutchman essentially made a gift of 1½ points to Nimzowitsch and Capablanca. Let's look at his uncommonly fighting game with the legendary Cuban champion, who on this occasion could dream only of a draw.

Game 7

M.Euwe-J.R.Capablanca

Carlsbad 1929

Nimzo-Indian Defence E36

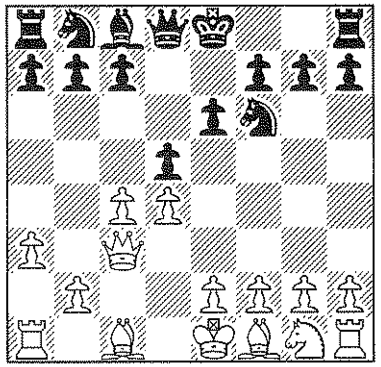
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕c2 d5 5 a3

Later 5 cxd5 became fashionable followed by 5...exd5 6 ♗g5 or the hypermodern 5...♕xd5!? (Alekhine) 6 e3 (6 ♘f3 ♕f5! – Romanishin) 6...c5 – the disputes in this variation stretch from the Alekhine-Euwe return match (Holland 1937) to my own games with Anand and Kramnik (1995-2001).

5...♗xc3+

This justifies 3...♗b4. In the event of 5...♗e7?! Black is in a Queen's Gambit a tempo down: a2-a3 is a very useful inclusion for White. There can follow 6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♗f4 or 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 ♗g5 (Euwe-Bogoljubow, Bad Nauheim 1937).

6 ♕xc3

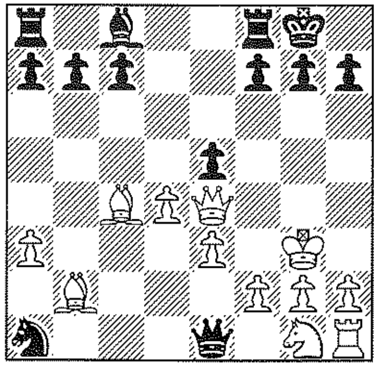


6...dxc4

It is also possible not to concede the centre – 6...♘c6 7 ♘f3 (7 e3 e5!) 7...♘e4 (7...a5 8 b3! Capablanca-Mikenas, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939) 8 ♕b3!?, or immediately 6...♘e4 7 ♕c2 with two main lines:

1) 7...♘c6 8 e3 e5, and here not 9 f3 ♘f6 10 cxd5 ♕xd5 11 ♗c4 ♕d6 (Vidmar-Alekhine, San Remo 1930) or 9 ♘f3 ♗f5 10 ♗d3 exd4 with equal chances (this is how

Flohr, Fine and Botvinnik defended in the 1930s), but the sharp variation 9 cxd5 ♕xd5 10 ♗c4 ♕a5+ 11 b4! ♘xb4 12 ♕xe4 ♘c2+ 13 ♔e2 ♕e1+ 14 ♔f3 ♘xa1 15 ♗b2 0-0 (or 15...♗e6 16 d5 0-0-0 17 dxe6 fxe6 18 ♔g3) 16 ♔g3.



Analysis diagram

16...h6! (16...♗d7?! 17 ♘f3! ♕xh1 18 ♘g5; 16...♔h8?! 17 dxe5! ♗e6 18 ♘f3 ♕xh1 19 ♘g5 g6 20 ♘xf7+! ♖xf7 21 ♗xe6 ♖g7 22 ♗f7! was winning for White in Atalik-Sax, Szeged 1997) 17 h4 ♕d2! 18 ♘f3! (18 ♗xa1 ♕c1!) 18...♕xb2 19 ♘g5! ♕c2! 20 ♗d3 ♗f5!! 21 ♕xf5 g6 22 ♕e4 ♕c6 23 ♕xc6 bxc6 24 ♘f3 ♘b3 25 ♘xe5, and White has no more than sufficient compensation for the exchange (*New in Chess*);

2) 7...c5 8 dxc5 ♘c6, after which White is at the crossroads:

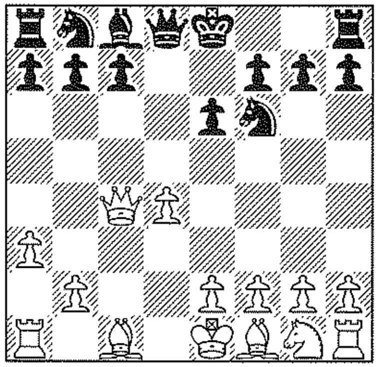
a) 9 e3 ♕a5+ 10 ♗d2 ♘xd2 (if 10...♕xc5?! there is 11 b4 ♕e7 12 ♗c1 a5 13 b5 ♘e5 14 ♗b2 ♘g4 15 ♘h3 Ryumin-Capablanca, Moscow 1935) 11 ♕xd2 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 (12 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 13 ♖c1 b5! 14 cxb6 ♗b7 and ...♔e7 with good compensation) 12...♕xc5 13 ♖c1 ♕g5 14 f4 ♕h4+ 15 ♕f2 ♕xf2+ 16 ♔xf2 ♔e7 17 ♘f3 ♖d8 18 ♗b5 ♗d7 with equality (Euwe-Petrov, Stockholm 1937);

b) 9 ♘f3 ♕a5+ 10 ♘d2 ♘d4! (10...♘xd2 11 ♗xd2 ♕xc5 12 e3, as in Reshevsky-Capablanca, AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938, is quite dull) 11 ♕d3 e5 12 b4 ♕a4 13 ♖a2! (but not 13 ♘xe4? dxe4 14 ♕d1 ♘c2+ 15 ♔d2 e3+! 16 ♔c3 ♗f5 etc.) 13...♘xd2 (13...♗f5!?) 14 ♕xd2 (14 ♖xd2 ♗f5 15 ♕e3?! 0-0-0! 16 g4 ♕c2! Bareev-Ivanchuk, Novgorod 1994) 14...dxc4 15 e3 ♘b3 16 ♕c3 ♗e6 17 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♘xc1 19 ♕xc1 a5! ½-½ (Bronstein-Boleslavsky, Saltsjöbaden Interzonal 1948);

c) 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♘f3 ♗f5 (after 10...♕a5+ 11 ♗d2 ♕xc5 12 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 White retains the initiative with both 13 ♗e3, Kasparov-Kir.Georgiev, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988 and 13 ♖c1, Bareev-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2003) 11 b4 0-0 (11...d4!? 12 g4 ♗g6 13 ♕c4 d3! 14 ♗g2 ♕f6 15 ♖a2 ♘e5 Kramnik-Anand, Dortmund 1999) 12 ♗b2 (12 ♕b2!?), and now not 12...♘g3? 13 ♕c3 d4 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15 fxg3 ♘c2+ 16 ♔f2 ♕g5 17 h4 ♕h6 18 g4! ♗e4 19 g5 ♕g6 20 ♖d1 with an attack (Euwe-Najdorf, Mar del Plata 1947), but 12...b6 13 b5 bxc5 14 bxc6 ♕a5+ (14...♖b8 15 0-0-0!) 15 ♘d2 ♖ab8 16 c7 ♖b3! (Kasparov-Renet, Evry simultaneous 1989), or 12...♖e8 13 ♖d1 b6 with a sharp game (Ivanchuk-Topalov, Monaco rapidplay 2001).

7 ♕xc4

The critical juncture of the opening.

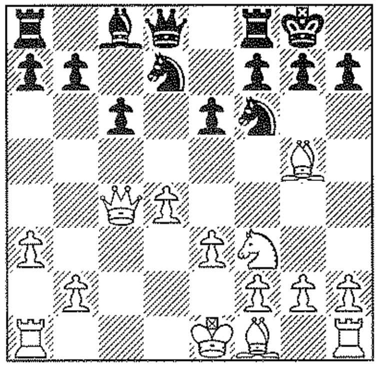


7...0-0

Black can hardly equalise with 7...♘c6 8 ♘f3 0-0 (Bogoljubow-Alekhine, Bled 1931) in view of 9 b4! However, Short's move 7...b6! is interesting, for example: 8 ♘f3 (8 ♗f4 ♗a6! 9 ♕xc7 ♕xc7 10 ♗xc7 ♘c6) 8...♗a6 9 ♕c2 (9 ♕a4 ♕d7 10 ♕c2, Bareev-Short, Moscow rapidplay 2002, is stronger) 9...0-0 10 ♗g5 ♘bd7 11 e4 ♗xf1 (11...♕c8!? was tried in M.Gurevich-Short, Sarajevo 2000) 12 ♖xf1 h6 (12...♕e8!? 13 0-0-0 c5) 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 0-0-0 ♖c8 15 ♔b1 ♕e7 16 ♖fe1 ♖fd8 17 ♘e5 c5 18 d5 exd5 19 exd5 ♕c7 20 ♘c6 ♖d7 21 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 22 d6 ♕xd6 23 ♖xd6 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖d1 ♖e7 with sufficient compensation for the queen (Kasparov-Kramnik, Moscow blitz, 2nd matchgame 1998).

8 ♗g5 c6 9 ♘f3 ♘bd7 10 e3

'A more lasting way of preserving his advantage than the seemingly more aggressive 10 e4, after which there might follow 10...h6 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 e5 (else ...e6-e5) 12...♕e7 13 ♗d3 ♘b6 14 ♕c2 ♖d8 with the possibility that he can free himself with ...♗d7, ...♘d5, ...♖ac8, ...b7-b6 and ...c6-c5.' (Euwe)



10...♕a5+ 11 b4 ♕d5 12 ♕c2

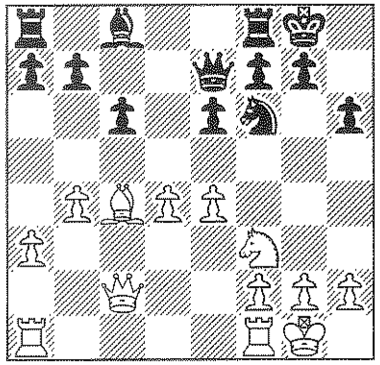
12 ♕xd5 exd5 13 ♗d3 is also in White's favour, but Euwe keeps the queens on, because his opponent is cramped and has difficulty in developing his c8-bishop.

16...h6 13 ♗c4 ♕d6 14 ♗xf6

'An attractive alternative was the more obvious 14 ♗f4 ♕e7 15 h3 (to preserve the bishop against ...♘h5) 15...a5! 16 b5 c5 17 0-0 followed by 18 ♘e5.' (Euwe)

14...♘xf6 15 e4 ♕e7 16 0-0

This resembles a position from the 11th game of the Capablanca-Lasker match (*Volume 1, Game No.91*), but there things were more difficult for Black, since all four knights were still on the board.



16...a5!

'Absolutely essential under the circumstances. The fact that White later on seizes the a-file is to be attributed to subsequent inexact play by Black, rather than to any inherent defect in the text.' (Euwe)

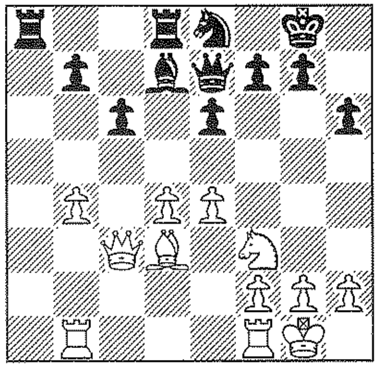
17 ♖ab1 (if 17 b5, then 17...c5!) **17...axb4 18 axb4 ♗d7 19 ♗d3 ♖fd8?!**

As Capablanca pointed out after the game, 19...♖a3! was better. Indeed, by then playing ...♖fa8 Black could have counted on equality.

20 ♕c3

'This move has a number of functions: it prevents ...♖a3 and at the same time guards the d4-pawn by way of preparation for the manoeuvre ♘d2-c4.' (Euwe) For example, 20...♗e8 21 ♘d2! etc.

20...♘e8



21 ♕c5! (with the opponent's passive minor pieces, this gains in strength) **21...♔f8!** (21...♕xc5?! 22 bxc5, attacking the b7-pawn)
22 ♖a1 ♕xc5

'22...b6 23 ♕xb6 ♖ab8 24 ♕c5 ♖xb4 25 ♖fc1 ♖c8 is also not without its difficulties for Black, due to his backward c-pawn, passive bishop, weak dark squares and generally cramped position.' (Euwe)

23 bxc5 ♔e7 24 ♖fb1 ♖xa1

A forced exchange. 24...♖ab8 25 ♖a7 ♗c8 is bad – 26 ♗a6! ♘c7 27 ♗xb7 and ♖b6 wins.

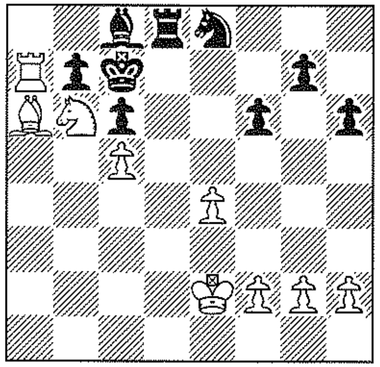
25 ♖xa1 ♗c8 26 ♔f1 (according to Euwe, 26 ♗c4 was also possible, preventing ...e6-e5)

26...e5?!

'This move is severely criticised in the tournament book, which recommends the passive course ...♘c7, ...f7-f6 etc. The criticism is hardly justified, as passive play would allow White to strengthen his position comfortably.' (Euwe)

27 ♘xe5 ♖xd4 28 ♔e2 f6 29 ♘c4 ♖d8 30 ♖a7 ♔d7 31 ♘b6+ ♔c7 32 ♗a6!

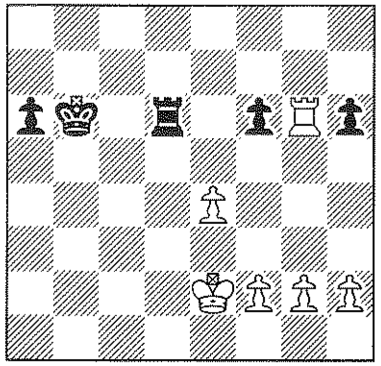
A spectacular and, it would seem, decisive blow!



32...♘d6

32...♔b8? would have lost quickly: 33 ♘xc8! bxa6 34 ♘e7! ♔xa7 35 ♘xc6+ and ♘xd8. More interesting was 32...♖d4!? 33 ♘xc8 ♖xe4+ (33...♔xc8? 34 ♗xb7+ ♔b8 35 ♖a8+) 34 ♔d3 ♖a4 – according to the tournament book, after 35 ♘d6?! ♘xd6 36 cxd6+ ♔xd6 37 ♖xb7 ♖xa6 38 ♖xg7 h5 Black holds on, but Euwe gives 35 ♗c4! ♖xa7 36 ♘xa7 ♔b8 37 ♘xc6+ bxc6 38 ♔e4 ♔c7 39 ♔f5 ♔d7 40 ♔g6 ♔e7 41 ♗f7 winning.

33 ♘xc8 ♔xc8 34 cxd6 bxa6 35 ♖c7+ ♔b8 36 ♖xc6 ♔b7 37 ♖c7+ ♔b6 38 ♖xg7 ♖xd6 39 ♖g6

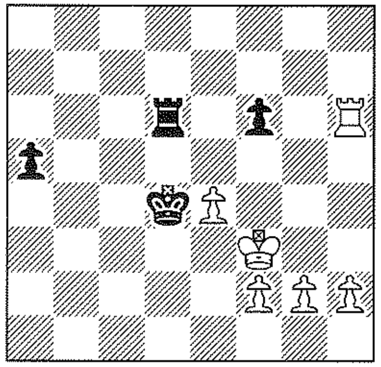


This rook ending, which is won for White, has been reached by force. Now only care and accuracy are required of him. 'His only concern is the opponent's passed a-pawn.' (Euwe)

39...♔c5 (if 39...h5 then 40 e5! wins) **40 ♖xh6 ♔d4 41 ♔f3!**

'Simple and good. The recommended alternative 41 ♖h5 ♔xe4 42 ♖a5 is by no means so clear.' (Euwe) But it is also very good: White inevitably creates a pair of connected passed pawns on the flank.

41...a5

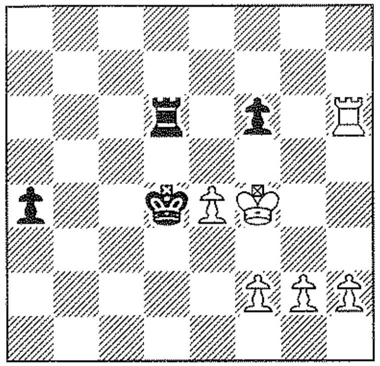


42 ♔f4!

The tournament book indicates a 'quick win' – 42 e5 ♔xe5 43 ♖h5+ f5 44 g4 ♖f6 45 ♔e3. But Euwe continued the variation: 45...a4! (otherwise White simply takes on f5, since his king is within the square of the a-pawn) 46 ♔d3 (46 f4+ ♔d5 47 g5 ♖a6 is hardly any better) 46...♖d6+ 47 ♔c4 (47 ♔e3 ♖f6) 47...♔f4!, and a win for White is out of the question.

42...a4

The most important moment of the entire game.



43 ♖h5?

A vexing oversight. As was shown by Tartakower, there was an easy win by 43 ♖h3! (this was in fact the point of 42 ♔f4!), for example: 43...♖a6 44 ♖a3 ♔c4 45 h4 ♔b4 46 ♖a1 a3 47 ♔f5 a2 48 g4 ♔b3 49 h5 ♔b2 50 ♖xa2+, or 43...♖e6 44 ♖e3 a3 45 ♖xa3 ♖xe4+ 46 ♔f5 ♖e2 47 ♖f3 and wins.

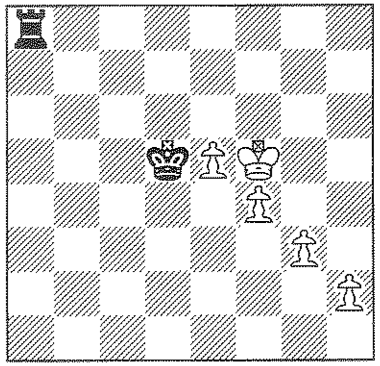
43...♖a6! 44 ♖d5+ ♔c3 45 ♖d1 a3

'It is obvious that in comparison to the variations given above, Black has gained several precious tempi – the difference between a loss and a draw.' (Euwe)

46 ♔f5 a2 47 f4 a1♕ 48 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 49 ♔xf6 ♖a6+ 50 ♔f5 ♔d4 51 e5 ♔d5 52 g3

Defending the f4-pawn, so that the king can advance. However, the nimble black rook successfully copes with the phalanx of white pawns.

52...♖a8 53 ♔f6 ♖a6+! (of course, not 53...♖h8 54 h4 ♖g8? because of 55 e6! ♖f8+ 56 ♔g7 ♖e8 57 f5 winning) **54 ♔f5 ♖a8 ½-½!**



Euwe supports the peaceful outcome with the variation 55 h4 ♖g8 56 ♔f6 ♖xg3! (since the white king is not yet on the seventh rank!) 57 e6 ♖g4!! 58 f5 ♖xh4 59 e7 ♖e4 60 ♔f7 ♔d6 61 e8♕ (61 f6 ♔d7) 61...♖xe8 62 ♔xe8 ♔e5.

In the Carlsbad 1929 tournament book there are also some truly prophetic lines: 'Dr Euwe belongs to those chosen few, who are destined to take part in the battle for the title of world champion. He combines a deep knowledge of the openings with considerable aggression and excellent combinative qualities, he is restrained and accurate, and he also possesses the ability, highly important for a chess master, to maintain his composure at the required moment. He has a few deficiencies: his skills and knowledge are weakly consolidated, and his technique is still poorly sharpened – all this will come with experience. And when this happens, then look out! He will no longer give up deserved points in such an unlikely way, as in the games with Nimzowitsch and Capablanca!'

Surprisingly, the 28-year-old grandmaster then gave up top-class chess for a long while, devoting nearly all his time to teaching mathematics in the high school: the doctor of sciences was dreaming of becoming a professor! He again gave a reminder of his strength only in Hastings 1930/31: 1. Euwe – 7 out of 9; 2. Capablanca – 6½; 3. Sultan Khan – 6 etc. The 'Euwe committee' promptly wanted to test who was who, by arranging a match of 10 games between Euwe and Capablanca in July 1931. Both players confirmed their high renown, but the ex-world champion was more accurate (the Dutchman twice missed a win) and won with a score of 6-4 (+2 =8).

'Euwe is undoubtedly one of the strongest modern players,' said Capablanca after the match. 'If he does lack something, he is still young and there is much that he can learn. He combines reliable positional understanding with outstanding combinative ability. It even seems to me that to win against him is more difficult than, for example, against Bogoljubow.' In this last sentence one can guess at the desperate argument at a distance between Capa and Alekhine...

After missing the historic 'Alekhine' tournaments in San Remo 1930 and Bled 1931, Euwe was nevertheless able to play, since it was July, in Bern 1932: 1. Alekhine – 12½ out of 15; 2-3. Euwe and Flohr – 11½; 4. Sultan Khan – 11; 5-6. Bernstein and Bogoljubow – 10 etc. However, this excellent result did not change the plans of the young scientist. In the summer of 1933 he won the Dutch Championship for the fourth time (8 out of 9), after which he decided to give up chess for a few years and concentrate on mathematics. However, Caissa decreed otherwise.

'At the very end of 1933,' recalls Euwe, 'in a café I accidentally met Hans Kmoch, the Austrian master and analyst, who was then living in Holland. He knew of my decision to give up chess, but evidently had never approved of it. In Kmoch's opinion, I could achieve much more than I had, and could test my powers in a battle for the title of world champion.... On two counts Kmoch was able to convince me that, although Alekhine was undoubtedly stronger than me as a practical player, with thorough preparation I could acquire enough of an advantage, that the outcome of the match would be at the least unclear... From this moment the decision was practically made: I would challenge Alekhine to a match for the world championship!'

Soon in Holland a special committee was set up to organise the match (another version of the 'Euwe committee'), securing the necessary financial conditions – or more precisely, the prize fund for the champion. Alekhine happily accepted the challenge, and in May 1934 the two parties signed an agreement to a match of 30 games, planning it for autumn 1935. The winner would have to score 15½ points, winning no less than six games. In the event of a tie (15-15) the champion would retain his title, and in the event of him losing he had the right to a return match (Alekhine did not repeat Capablanca's mistake; similar foresight was later displayed by Botvinnik and Karpov, but the same cannot be said about me in the match with Kramnik in 2000).

The time for preparation had arrived. After lengthy thought, in which his friend Kmoch played the role of chief consultant, Euwe came to the historically valuable conclusion that the preparation for a match should consist of three components: physical, theoretical and practical. And he engaged, first of all, in sport – he swam, boxed, played tennis, did regular gymnastics and took cold showers, and secondly – in the development of a serious opening repertoire, which proved, in his words to be a 'titanic task'.

An important stage in the challenger's practical preparation was the super-tournament in Zürich (July 1934). There the champion was also playing. 'In the course of the play it quickly transpired that Alekhine was as strong as before,' writes Euwe. 'If after this tournament I could with dignity have withdrawn my challenge, I would perhaps have considered this... Alekhine played in the style of San Remo, gaining one brilliant win after another. He scored 13 out of 15, and Flohr and I shared second place, a point behind. After us came Bogoljubow, Nimzowitsch, Lasker, Bernstein, Stahlberg... For me this was not a bad result. I also gained some satisfaction from the fact that I was able to defeat my mighty opponent in our individual game.'

Game 8

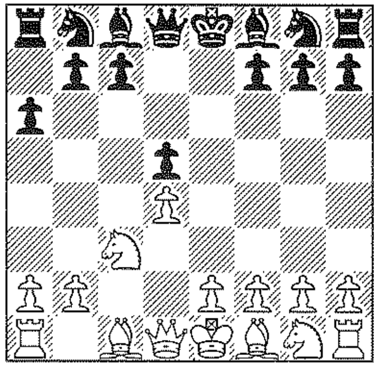
M.Euwe-A.Alekhine

Zürich 1934, 5th round
Queen's Gambit Declined D31

1 c4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 a6

The Janowski Defence, which in general Alekhine did not greatly favour, but a month and a half before Zürich he employed it in the 21st game of his match with Bogoljubow (*Volume 1, Game No.135*).

4 cxd5 (here after 4 c5, in contrast to the variation 3 ♘f3 a6, there is the counter 4...e5!, with the idea of 5 dxe5 ♗e6 6 ♗e3 ♘d7) **4...exd5**



5 ♗f4!?

More popular then was 5 ♘f3 c6 (5...♘f6 6 ♗g5; 5...♗e7 6 ♗f4), for example:

1) 6 ♗f4 ♘e7 (later 6...♗d6!? and ...♘e7 was played) 7 e3 ♕b6 8 ♕d2 ♘g6 9 ♗g3 ♗f5 10 a3 ♘d7 11 ♗e2 ♘f6 12 0-0 ♗e7 with equality (Voellmy-Euwe, Bern 1932);

2) 6 ♕c2 ♗d6 7 ♗g5 ♘e7 8 e3 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♕c7 10 ♖c1 ♘g6 11 ♘h4 ♗e6 with a comfortable game for Black (Staehelin-Euwe, Bern 1932);

3) 6 ♕b3!? ♗d6 (or 6...♘f6 7 ♗g5 ♗e7 8 e3 0-0 9 ♗d3 ♘bd7 10 ♕c2! ♖e8 11 ♗f4! Grünfeld-Alekhine, Budapest 1921) 7 g3 (7 ♗g5 ♗e7! 8 ♗f4 ♘f6 Lasker-Janowski, London 1899) 7...♘e7 8 ♗f4 ♗xf4 9 gxf4 ♘f5 10 e3 ♘d7 11 ♗d3 ♘f6 12 ♘e5 ♕e7 13 ♘a4 with a slight initiative for White (Alekhine-Rubinstein, Baden-Baden 1925).

Years later at the 23rd USSR Championship (Leningrad 1956) an improvement for Black came to light – 8...0-0!? 9 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 10 ♗g2 ♘d7 11 0-0 ♘f6 12 ♘e5 ♖b8 (Spassky- Polugayevsky) as well as a new try for White – 6 ♗g5 ♗e7 7 h4!? (Korchnoi-Polugayevsky).

5...♘f6

In the game Müller-Euwe from the same tournament Black obtained reasonable play after 5...c6 6 e3 ♘e7 (the best place for the knight) 7 ♗d3 ♗f5 8 ♘ge2 ♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 ♘g6 10 ♗g3 ♗e7. 6...♗d6!? is also quite good – a well-known position from the Portisch Variation is reached (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗e7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4 c6 6 e3 ♗d6) with the inclusion of the move ...a7-a6, which has both pluses (it hinders the b2-b4-b5 attack), and minuses (it facilitates the manoeuvre ♘a4-c5).

'Close examination of the consequences of 3...a6 soon reveals that the range of possibilities available to Black is greatly restricted; hence, it is totally unsuited to Alekhine's imaginative style, and it is soon clear that he does not feel at home in this rather sterile line of play.' (Euwe)

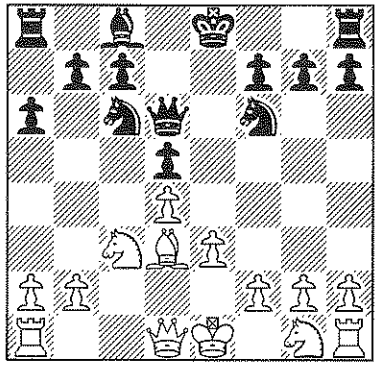
6 e3 ♗d6

In Euwe's opinion, Alekhine's recommendation of 6...♗f5 7 ♕b3 ♖a7!? is rather bizarre and unattractive. But nowadays this sort of original procedure is still topical (in similar positions it has been employed by Hodgson, Morozevich...) and there is some point to it. Just as there is to Maróczy's move 6...c5!? – although after 7 ♘f3 ♘c6 8 ♗e2 White retains a minimal advantage.

7 ♗xd6 (7 ♗g3!?) **7...♕xd6 8 ♗d3 ♘c6?!**

An artificial idea! 'An unusual development of the knight in this opening, and one which does not deserve emulation. Better seems

8...0-0, avoiding a backward c-pawn.' (Euwe) However, even here after 9 ♘ge2 and 10 0-0 White has some advantage.

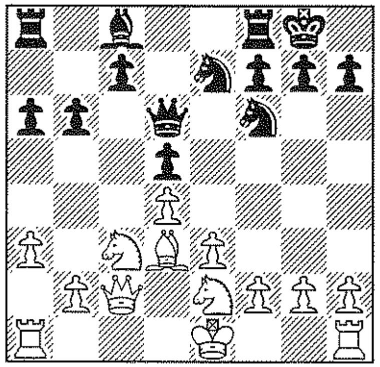


9 ♘ge2 0-0 10 a3 (signalling the start of an offensive on the queenside) **10...♘e7 11 ♕c2!**

Preventing Black from solving the problem of his c8-bishop by 11...♗f5.

11...b6?

Such a rare oversight by the Russian champion of a veiled tactical stroke – this is what is meant by having a position you dislike! He should have played 11...♗d7 (Euwe) or 11...♘g6 (Alekhine).



12 b4?

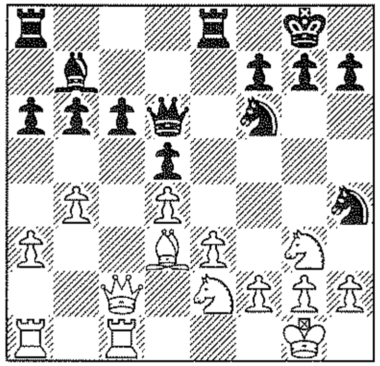
Returning the compliment. 'White is intent on purely positional considerations (Black can advance his c-pawn now only at the cost of isolating his d-pawn) and thus overlooks the tactical finesse 12 e4! Black must then make the disagreeable choice between 12...dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♘d5 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 16 ♗e4, when White wins a pawn, or 12...♘e8 13 0-0 ♗b7 14 e5 ♕h6 15 ♘g3 and White has a strong attack.' (Euwe) It need hardly be said that the computer indicates the move 12 e4! instantly...

12...♗b7 13 0-0 ♖fe8 14 ♘g3 ♘g6 15 ♖fc1 ♘h4

Preventing the unpleasant ♘f5. Despite the 'amnesty' on the 12th move, Black is still a long way from equalising.

16 ♘ce2 c6?!

'A far better way to defend the weak c-pawn was 16...♖e7. The text move results in an organic weakness which is irremediable: by advancing his pawn to a5 White can eliminate the pawn which now hinders him from occupying the key c5-square.' (Euwe)



17 ♖ab1! ♖e7 (too late!) **18 a4! ♖ae8 19 a5 b5 20 ♘f4 ♖c7 21 ♕c5 ♕d7**

As was shown by Euwe, the exchange 21...♕xc5 22 ♖xc5 would merely have made it easier for White to exploit his positional advantage (Black has a weak c6-pawn and a 'bad' bishop at b7), for example: 22...♘d7 23 ♖c3 ♖cc8 24 ♘f5 ♘xf5 25 ♗xf5 etc.

22 ♖e1 ♘g6!

A good defensive plan: the knight urgently returns home, via e7, to c8 – to the defence of the dark squares, and then, if the opportunity arises, via d6 to c4, blocking the c-file.

23 ♗f5 ♕d8 24 ♘d3 ♗c8

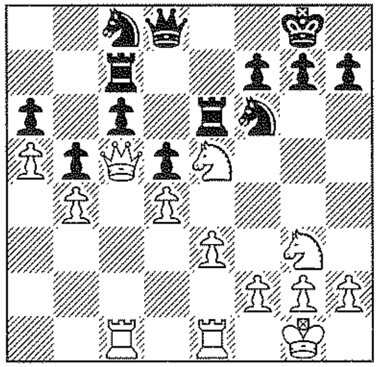
With the exchange of this bishop, the c6-pawn becomes even weaker, but Black can hardly not exchange this half-dead piece!

25 ♖bc1 (25 ♗xc8!?) **25...♘e7! 26 ♗xc8 ♘xc8** (with the obvious intention of ...♘d6) **27 ♘e5**

27 ♕c2!? ♘d6 28 ♘c5 ♕c8 29 f3 ♖ce7 30 e4 also came into consideration, and if 30...dxe4 31 fxe4 ♕g4, then 32 ♕d1! Here Black's chronic weaknesses on the queenside are highly perceptible.

27...♖e6

If 27...♘d6? White had prepared 28 ♘xc6 ♕d7 29 ♘e5! ♖xc5 30 ♘xd7 ♖xc1 31 ♘xf6+ gxf6 32 ♖xc1 winning.



28 e4!

'At this point one would have expected some such purely positional continuation as 28 ♕c2 ♘d7 29 ♘d3 etc. The text is severely criticised by Alekhine on the grounds that it is based *wholly* on a tactical finesse. This latter consideration is, however, only incidental to the primary *strategic* significance of the text move, which White had had in view for some time (cf. his 22nd move). The basic point underlying the text is that the player with the greater freedom of action ought to strive to increase his mobility by opening up new lines wherever possible. The text accomplishes this purpose by placing the e-file at White's disposal.' (Euwe)

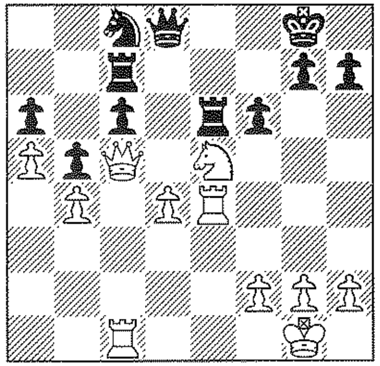
The Dutch grandmaster adds that he chose this committal move after careful and thorough consideration: after all, Black obtains the d5-square for his pieces and the d4-pawn is weakened. I would add that in the event of the 'purely positional' 28 ♕c2 it would now be possible to reply 28...♘d6!, since 29 ♘xc6? fails to 29...♕e8 winning, and after 29 ♘d3 ♖e8 30 ♘c5 ♖a7 and ...♘c4 Black could have successfully defended.

28...♘xe4

Alekhine's suggestion in the tournament book 28...dxe4 29 ♘xe4 ♘d5 30 g3 f6 31 ♘d3 ♕c7?! was refuted by Euwe with 32 ♕xe7! ♖exe7 (after the capture with the knight or 32...♖cxe7 there follows 33 ♘dc5 winning) 33 ♘ec5 ♖a7 (33...♖xe1+ 34 ♖xe1 ♖a7? 35 ♖c8+) 34 ♘e6 winning a pawn and the game. 31...♖ce7 would appear to be better, but it too favours White: 32 ♘c3 ♖xe1+ 33 ♘xe1 ♘c7 34 ♕xc6 ♕xd4 35 ♖d1 ♕xb4 36 ♖d8+ ♔f7 37 ♖xc8 ♖xe1+ 38 ♔g2 ♘e8 39 ♕xa6.

29 ♘xe4 dxe4 30 ♖xe4 f6?

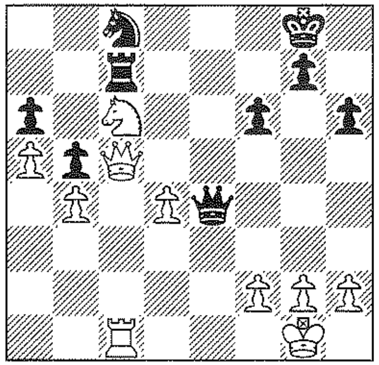
'Too optimistic. Decidedly better was 30...♘e7.' (Euwe) Indeed, after 31 ♖ce1 White's advantage is appreciable, but as yet by no means decisive.



31 ♘f7! (an unexpected tactical stroke, leading to the win of a pawn) **31...♕e8**

There is no choice: if 31...♔xf7, then 32 ♕h5+ ♔e7 (32...g6 33 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 34 ♕h8+ ♔e7 35 ♖xe6+) 33 ♖xe6+ ♔xe6 34 ♖e1+ ♔d6 35 ♕c5+ ♔d7 36 ♕f5+ ♔d6 37 ♕e6 mate.

32 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 33 ♘d8 ♕e4 34 ♘xc6 h6



Black does not have any compensation for the pawn, so the fate of the game is decided.

'White's technical task now consists in utilising his d-pawn, attacking the a6-pawn and judiciously exchanging pieces. White should keep the knights on the board, for his knight is obviously more effective than is Black's; on the other hand, the presence of the queens is Black's best drawing chance, hence White should play for the exchange of queens.' (Euwe)

35 d5!

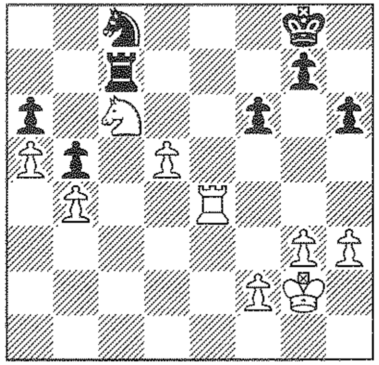
On the basis of the preceding comment, it would be radically wrong to play 35 ♘e7+? ♖xe7 36 ♕xc8+ ♔h7 37 h3 (37 ♕c3 ♖d7!) 37...♕xd4 38 ♕xa6 ♕xb4 39 ♕b6 – White may still have an advantage, but the win is still rather problematic.

35...♕d3 36 h3 ♕d2 37 g3 ♔h8 38 ♔g2 ♕d3 39 ♖e1 ♔h7 40 ♖e3 ♕d2 41 ♖e8 (according to Alekhine, the continuation 41 ♖e4!? and ♖d4 was very strong) **41...♕d3 42 ♕d4 ♕c4**

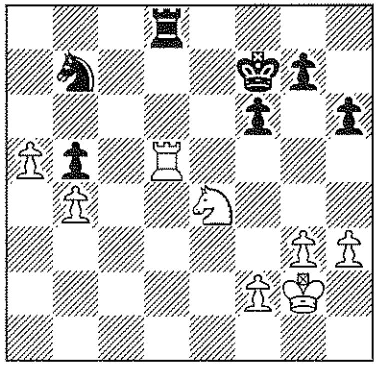
'Equally hopeless is the try 42...♕xd4 43 ♘xd4 ♘d6 44 ♖a8 ♖c4 45 ♖xa6 ♖xd4 46 ♖xd6 ♖xb4 47 ♖b6! ♔g6 48 a6 ♖a4 49 d6 ♔f7 50 ♖b7+ ♔e6 51 d7 ♔e7 52 a7 etc.' (Euwe)

43 ♕e4+! ♕xe4+ (43...g6? 44 ♕e6) **44 ♖xe4 ♔g8**

No better was 44...♖d7 45 ♖e8 ♖c7 (45...♘d6 46 ♖a8) 46 ♘b8 and wins.



45 ♘b8 ♔f7 46 ♘xa6 ♖d7 47 ♖d4 ♘e7 48 d6 ♘f5 (or 48...♘c8 49 ♘c7 ♖xd6 50 ♖xd6 ♘xd6 51 a6 winning) **49 ♖d5 ♘xd6 50 ♘c5 ♖d8 51 ♘e4 ♘b7**



52 a6! (more showy than 52 ♖xd8 ♘xd8 53 a6 ♘c6 54 ♘d6+ ♔c7 55 ♘xb5) **52...♔e6** (if 52...♖xd5, then 53 axb7 ♖d8 54 ♘d6+ ♔e6 55 ♘c8) **53 ♖xd8 1-0**

At the end of that summer in Leningrad a strong tournament of Soviet masters was held with the participation of the 'bourgeois representatives' Euwe and Kmoch. The result is well-known: first – Botvinnik with the favourite Euwe only sixth (+2 -2 =7), Kmoch seventh etc.

But Euwe was not too upset – for him this was a training event: 'The success in Zürich and the failure in Leningrad roughly balanced each other... Soon the Leningrad flop was forgotten, for the Christmas tournament in Hastings ended in a new and brilliant success. I shared first place with Flohr and Thomas, ahead of Botvinnik, Capablanca and Lilienthal. My result could have been even better, had I not agreed a draw in the last round with the outsider Norman. Our game was the last in the tournament, and I did not want to delay the prize-giving... Capablanca was amazed when he heard about this draw. He couldn't understand how I could offer a draw in a somewhat better position.'

However, Euwe had a truly chivalrous code of behaviour! It is an interesting thought: would anyone today agree a draw with an outsider, in order to avoid delaying his colleagues and the organisers?!

Hastings also pleased the contender to the throne for the reason that in his second meeting with the young, rapidly improving USSR Champion Botvinnik (the first, in Leningrad, ended in a draw) he gained a very convincing win. Although he was obviously anxious! 'At the board he, being a tall man, was unusually hunched, and was constantly and nervously adjusting his spectacles; when he was thinking over his move, it was noticeable how his ears reddened,' wrote an eye-witness about Euwe, and then also about his opponent: 'Exceptionally serious, the embodiment of iron will – that was Botvinnik during play. Only occasionally did he adjust the knot of his tie, betraying his anxiety.'

Game 9

M.Botvinnik-M.Euwe

Hastings 1934/35, 2nd round

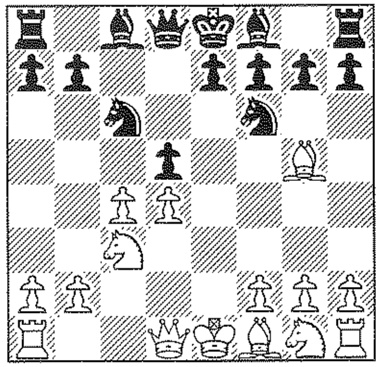
Queen's Gambit Accepted D26

1 c4 c6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3

The first opening transformation: from the English Opening to the Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann Defence.

5...♘c6 6 ♗g5

If 6 ♘f3 there is the popular line 6...♗g4 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♕b3 ♗xf3 9 gxf3 e6 10 ♕xb7 ♘xd4 11 ♗b5+ ♘xb5 12 ♕c6+ ♔e7 13 ♕xb5 ♕d7! 14 ♘xd5+ (14 ♕a5?! ♘xc3 15 ♕xc3 f6 16 ♗e3 ♔f7 17 0-0 ♗e7 18 ♖ac1 ♕d5! Mark Tseitlin-Kasparov, Daugavpils 1978) 14...♕xd5 15 ♕xd5 exd5 16 0-0 ♔e6 17 ♖e1+ ♔f5 or 15 ♗g5+ f6 16 ♕xd5 exd5 17 ♗e3 ♔e6 with equality, as has occurred in dozens of games (an example: Karpov-Kramnik, Linares 1993), but not 13...♘xc3?! 14 bxc3 ♕d7 15 ♖b1!, as in the game Fischer-Euwe (Leipzig Olympiad 1960), which we shall analyse in the third volume.



6...e6

'Less strong for Black now is 6...dxc4 7 d5 ♘c5 8 ♕d4.' (Euwe) Of course, he has in mind 8...♘d3+ 9 ♗xd3 cxd3 10 ♘f3! g6 11 ♗xf6 exf6 12 0-0 ♕b6?! (Botvinnik also condemned 12...♗e7 13 ♖ad1 0-0 14 ♖xd3 ♗f5 15 ♖d2 ♗d6 16 g4 ♗c8 17 ♘e4 and wins, but Euwe found the unclear 16...♗e5! 17 ♘xe5 fxe5 18 ♕xe5 ♗xg4 19 ♘e4 f6) 13 ♖fe1+ ♔d8 14 ♕h4! g5 15 ♕h5 ♗d6 16 ♕xf7 winning (Botvinnik-Flohr, Leningrad 9th match-game 1933).

However, nowadays they successfully employ 8...h6! (which was introduced in Anand-Seirawan, Amsterdam 1992). Therefore in reply to 6...dxc4?! they have begun playing 7 ♗xc4!, sacrificing the d4-pawn for rapid development and the initiative.

7 ♘f3

7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♗xf6?! ♕xf6 9 ♘xd5 ♕d8

10 ♗c4 ♗e6 is unfavourable for White. 'In his game against Kmoch in the Leningrad 1934 tournament, Botvinnik continued with 7 c5 and obtained a very strong game. Evidently of the opinion that his opponent is prepared for this line of play, he steers the game into other channels.' (Euwe)

7...dxc4

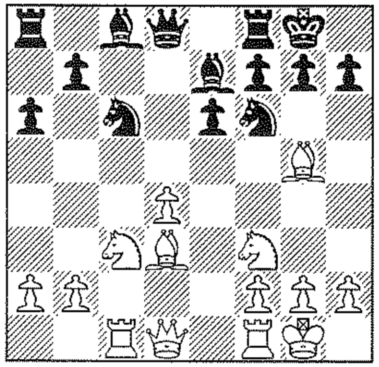
If 7...♗e7 once again good is 8 c5 0-0 9 ♗b5 (Keres-Alekhine, AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938) or 8...h6 9 ♗f4 (Kasparov-Anand, Amsterdam 1996).

But now another transformation occurs: one of the *tabiyas* of the Queen's Gambit Accepted is reached.

8 ♗xc4 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖c1

Since the plan with ♕e2 and ♖fd1 is not possible here (10 ♕e2? ♘xd4), White plans to set up the typical queen and bishop battery by ♗d3-b1 and ♕d3(c2), in order to force a weakening of Black's kingside.

10...a6 (with the obvious intention of ...b7-b5 and ...♗b7) **11 ♗d3**



11...h6

As we now know, this is a risky move: it weakens the b1-h7 diagonal. But... 'Forcing the bishop at g5 to show its hand. If Black plays 11...♘b4 at once, a possible continuation is 12 ♗b1 (*12 ♗xf6!? ♗xf6 13 ♗e4 – G.K.*) 12...♗d7 13 a3 (or 13 ♘e5 ♖c8) 13...♘bd5 14 ♕d3 g6 15 ♗h6 ♖e8, with difficult play.' (Euwe) For example, after 16 ♘e5 etc. 12...b5, 12...b6 and 12...♘fd5, which later occurred many times, lead to roughly the same thing.

11...♕a5 has also been played, as well as 11...♕d6, but most often seen is 11...♗d7 or 11...♘d5 12 ♘xd5 (12 h4!?) 12...♗xg5 (12...exd5 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♖c5; 14 ♖e1!? and ♘e5) 13 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 14 ♘b6 ♖b8 and White does not have anything special.

11...b6 can be met by 12 ♗xf6!? ♗xf6 13 ♘e4 with some advantage (Dreev-Chekhov, Protvino 1988). Or 11...b5?! 12 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 13 ♘e4 – here Euwe was wrong to fear 13 ♘xb5, since White cannot hold his extra pawn: 13...axb5 14 ♖xc6 ♗b7 15 ♖c2 ♖xa2 16 ♗xb5 ♕b6 17 ♗e2 (17 ♕e2 ♗xf3!) 17...♖xb2, or 15 ♖c5 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♕xd4 17 ♖xb5 ♖xa2 18 ♖d1 ♖d8 with equality.

12 ♗e3?!

A serious error. According to Botvinnik, towards the end of 1934, when he began his first tournament abroad, his nervous system was drained: 'It was not surprising that in Hastings I suffered a failure.' You may ask: at the age of 23 is it really possible to have a drained nervous system? I will reply: it would have been quite possible on your first visit to a capitalist country from Stalin's USSR...

12 ♗h4!, keeping the knight at f6 under fire, was much stronger. 'In that event, after 12...♘b4 13 ♗b1 b5 14 a3 ♘bd5 15 ♕d3 Black has 15...♘f4 at his disposal. White eliminates this possibility, however, by playing 15 ♕c2 (instead of 15 ♕d3), thus forcing the unpleasant weakening move ...g7-g5 or ...g7-g6.' (Euwe) For example: 15...♘xc3 16 bxc3 g5 17 ♗g3 ♗xa3 18 ♖ce1, then ♘e5 and f2-f4 with a powerful initiative for the pawn.

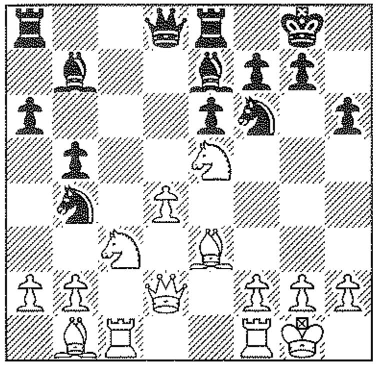
I should add that 12...b5?! would still have been dubious in view of 13 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 14 ♘e4 ♗d7 (14...♗b7? 15 ♘c5!) 15 ♗b1 ♗e7 16 ♕d3 f5 (16...g6 17 ♘c5) 17 ♘c5 ♗xc5 18 ♖xc5 ♕b6 19 ♖fc1 ♖ac8 20 ♕e3 ♔h8 (20...♘e7 21 ♘e5) 21 a3 b4 22 ♗a2 with a clear advantage to White (Polugayevsky-Ivanchuk, Roquebrune rapidplay 1992).

12...♘b4 13 ♗b1 b5 14 ♘e5

A typical manoeuvre – there is nothing

else, but in any case Black already has an excellent game: the idea of the ♕d3(c2) + ♗b1 battery has disappeared, since there is no threat of ♗xf6 and ♕h7+.

14...♗b7 15 ♕d2 ♖e8! (parrying the threat of 16 ♗xh6?! – 16...gxh6 17 ♕xh6 ♗f8! etc.)



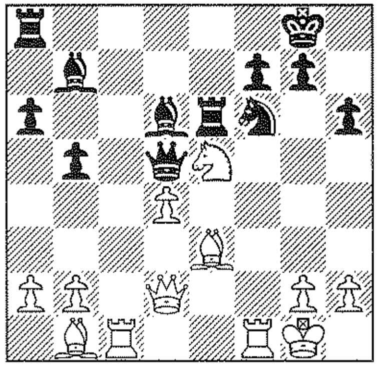
16 f4?

A favourite plan of the young Botvinnik, but, as Tarrasch joked, 'this move is always premature' and in the given instance 16 f3 equalising was much more appropriate.

16...♘bd5 17 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 18 f5 ♗d6!

'Parrying White's attack, as the knight at e5 cannot be maintained.' (Euwe)

19 fxe6 ♖xe6



20 ♗f5

'20 ♘f3 (20 ♘d3? ♖xe3) is met by 20...♘g4!, when 21 ♗f2 fails to 21...♘xh2.' (Euwe) However, after 21 ♗f4! White is alright. Therefore I would have preferred 20...♖ae8! (20...♗xh2+?! 21 ♘xh2 ♖xe3 is over-hasty in view of 22 ♖xf6! gxf6 23 ♘g4 ♖e6 24 ♗f5!) 21 ♖ce1 ♗xh2+! 22 ♘xh2 ♖xe3 winning.

20...♖e7 21 ♗h3 (21 ♖f2 ♗xe5 22 dxe5 ♖xe5 was no better) **21...♗xe5 22 dxe5 ♕xe5**

'White has some compensation for the lost pawn in the bishop pair.' (Euwe)

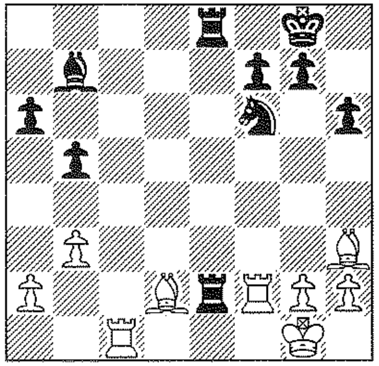
23 ♗f4

'23 ♗d4 could be met by 23...♖d8.' (Euwe) But after 24 ♗xe5 ♖xd2 25 ♗c3 ♖de2 26 ♗xf6 gxf6 27 ♖f2 Black has only a slight advantage. Therefore the computer recommends 23...♘e4! 24 ♗xe5 (24 ♕d3 ♕d5) 24...♘xd2 25 ♖fe1 ♖ae8 26 ♗g3 ♘e4 27 ♖c7! g6! 28 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 29 ♗d6 ♖e8 with chances of converting the extra pawn.

23...♕d5 24 ♕xd5

'White cannot avoid the queen swap, because the black pieces control the most important central squares. 24 ♗xh6 was impossible, of course, in view of 24...gxh6 (25 ♕xh6 ♖e2!).' (Euwe)

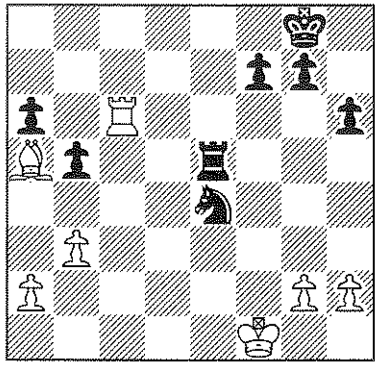
24...♘xd5 25 ♗d2 ♖ae8 26 b3 ♖e2 27 ♖f2 ♘f6



Threatening 28...♖xf2 and 29...♘e4+. As they say in such cases, the rest is a matter of technique, although it is not so elementary.

28 ♗a5 ♖xf2 29 ♔xf2 ♘e4+ 30 ♔f1 ♘g5 31 ♗d7 (according to Euwe, 31 ♗g4 was more tenacious.) **31...♖e7 32 ♗f5** (but not 32 ♖c7?! ♗e4! 33 a4 ♗d3+) **32...♖e5 33**

♗b1 ♗e4 34 ♗xe4 ♘xe4



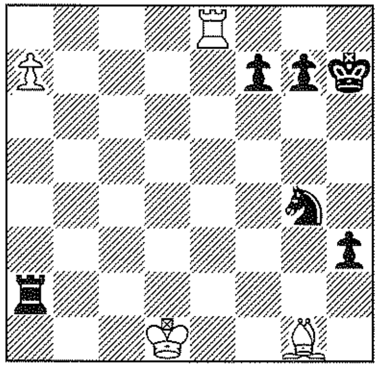
35 ♖c6?!

Euwe considered the best defence to be 35 ♖c8+ ♔h7 36 ♗e1. This would have prolonged the resistance, as would 35 ♔e2 ♖e6 followed by ...♔h7 etc.

35...♖f5+ 36 ♔e1 (if 36 ♔e2, then 36...♖f2+ 37 ♔e3 ♖xa2 wins for Black) **36...♖f2 37 a4 ♖xg2 38 ♖xa6**

'He might have tried 38 ♗c7 bxa4 39 bxa4 ♖a2 40 a5! (not 40 ♖xa6 ♖a1+ 41 ♔e2 ♖xa4!). However, Black has a stronger reply in 38...♖b2!' (Euwe)

38...bxa4 39 bxa4 ♖xh2 40 ♖a8+ ♔h7 41 ♗b6 ♖a2 42 a5 h5! (a race!) **43 a6 h4 44 a7 h3 45 ♗g1 ♘f6** (45...♘g5! would have immediately concluded matters) **46 ♔d1** (46 ♖d8 ♖xa7!) **46...♘g4 47 ♖e8**



47...h2

'Of course, not 47...♖xa7? 48 ♗xa7 h2 49 ♖e1. After the game Botvinnik pointed out the pretty continuation 47...♘f2+! 48 ♔e1 ♘d3+ 49 ♔d1 ♖xa7! 50 ♗xa7 h2 and the e1-square is not available for White's rook.' (Euwe)

48 ♗xh2 ♖xa7 49 ♗b8 ♖a8 50 ♖d8 ♘e5 51 ♗c7 ♖xd8+ 52 ♗xd8 ♔g6 53 ♔e2 ♔f5 54 ♔e3 ♔g4 55 ♗c7 ♘f3 56 ♔f2 f5 0-1

During the following nine months before the 'match of his life', Euwe taught in the school, engaged intensively in sport and studied opening theory, and also played a number of private training matches. The last of these was with Spielmann, and the challenger lost to the once formidable 52-year-old Austrian grandmaster: 4-6 (+2 -4 =4). Alekhine, on the other hand, made a voyage to Orebro, where he completely crushed the strongest Swedish masters (8½ out of 9!).

The Man who Defeated Alekhine

In the autumn of 1935 the time came for the next battle for the chess crown. Alekhine arrived in Holland as the clear favourite. 'Today I do not see anyone who could win against me,' he declared in a pre-match interview. In turn, Euwe modestly stated that he would endeavour to hold out as long as possible.

In fact, victory over Alekhine seemed then to be just as improbable as Alekhine's own victory over Capablanca in 1927 had been. 'Alekhine came into the chess world like Napoleon,' wrote Lasker. 'Did Euwe sense that he would be his Wellington?' This is unlikely. After all, the new challenger was not even a chess professional and did not have any impressive tournament victories. Comparing the results of the two players in the early 1930s, it would have been thought that Euwe would merely prove to be cannon fodder for Alekhine. Few remembered Alekhine's defeat at the hands of the Dutchman in Zürich 1934 or the difficulties he had encountered in their distant training match (1926/27). In a word, Euwe's chances were clearly underestimated by the chess world and, it would seem, by his opponent...

In this match for the world championship the players had official seconds: for Alekhine – the master Salo Landau, and for Euwe – his esteemed teacher Geza Maróczy. The challenger was also helped by Salo Flohr (which slightly unnerved Alekhine) and, in addition, Hans Kmoch was always ready to come to his aid, although he was appointed chief arbiter.

The match began on 3rd October in the conference hall of the Amsterdam Carlton Hotel. 'Applause broke out: the players made their appearance,' recalls an eye-witness, Alexander Koblenz (Tal's future trainer). 'Alekhine in an elegant dinner-jacket, and Euwe in a modest dark-blue suit. The grandmasters sat down at the chess board and a silver handbell was rung. The first move in the match was made by... the Burgemeester of Amsterdam. He advanced Alekhine's queen's pawn by two squares.'

Game 10

A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 1st game
Slav Defence D17

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6

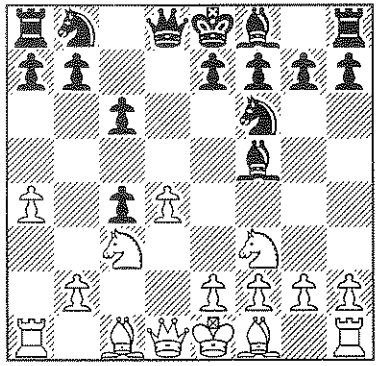
The Slav Defence was in the armoury of both players and it became the main battlefield of the 1935 and 1937 matches, causing much unpleasantness to... Alekhine! In the first match he lost the 'Slav dispute' (+3 -4 =4), and in the second he drew it (+3 -3 =5), although he had a number of highly dubious positions.

The employment of the same variations for both colours is a method that occurred back in the Capablanca-Alekhine match (1927), and was later developed in my matches with Karpov.

3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3

In the eighth and tenth games Euwe defeated his formidable opponent with the help of 4 e3 e6 5 ♘c3 a6?! 6 c5!, but sounder is 4...♗f5! 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♘c3 e6, as in the 11th and 16th games.

4...dxc4 5 a4 (5 e3 b5 – *Game No.85*) **5...♗f5**



6 ♘e5

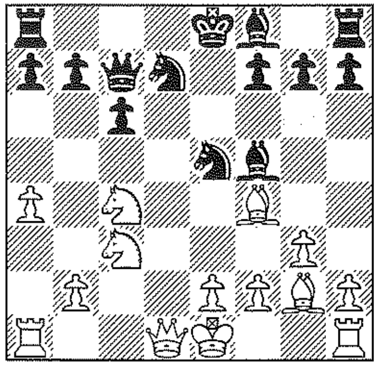
The 15th game went 6 ♘h4 ♗c8 (6...e6?! 7 ♘xf5 exf5 8 e3 Alekhine-Stoltz, Bled 1931) 7 e3 (7 e4!? e5 8 ♗xc4 exd4 9 e5 is sharper) 7...e5! 8 dxe5?! (8 ♗xc4 exd4 9 exd4 is better) 8...♕xd1+ 9 ♘xd1 (9 ♔xd1 ♘g4) 9...♗b4+ 10 ♗d2 (10 ♘c3 ♘e4) 10...♗xd2+ 11 ♔xd2 ♘e4+ 12 ♔e1 ♗e6 with equal chances. The quiet move 6 e3 (*Game No.21*) made its appearance only in the return match of 1937.

6...♘bd7 (6...e6 – cf. the opening comment to *Game No.20*) **7 ♘xc4 ♕c7**

Nowadays they also play 7...♘d5 8 g3 (8 f3!? e5 9 e4) 8...e5 9 ♗g2 exd4! (a weaker alternative is 9...♘xc3?! 10 bxc3 exd4 11 ♕xd4! ♘c5 12 ♕e3+ Kramnik-Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2001) 10 ♕xd4 ♕f6 11 ♕xf6 ♘7xf6 12 ♘xd5 cxd5 13 ♘e3, and White has merely a slightly better ending (Kasparov-Morozevich, Astana 2001).

8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗f4 ♘fd7 (the alternative is 10...♖d8 11 ♕c1 ♗d6 12 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6) **11 ♗g2**

A very popular position in the early and mid-1930s. Landau, the champion's second, later recalled that two hours before the start of the game Alekhine had it on his board.



11...♗e6?!

In subsequent years players preferred 11...f6 12 0-0 ♖d8 or 11...♖d8 12 ♕c1 f6 (*Game Nos.14, 15 and 16*). Following the example of Alexander Morozevich, the current fashion is 11...g5!?, for example:

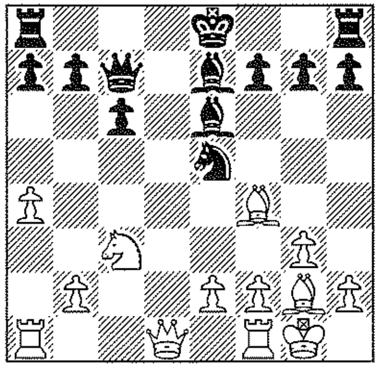
1) 12 ♘e3 gxf4 13 ♘xf5 0-0-0 14 ♕c2 ♘c5 (inferior is 14...♘g4?! 15 a5 fxg3 16 hxg3 a6 17 ♖a4 ♘df6 18 ♘e4 ♘xe4?! 19 ♗xe4 h5 20 ♔f1 ♔b8 21 ♔g2 ♗e7 22 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 23 ♗f3 Kasparov-Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2000) 15 0-0 ♘e6 16 ♖ad1 ♗c5 17 ♘e4 ♗b4 with approximate equality (Kramnik-Morozevich, Astana 2001, and Bareev-Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2002);

2) 12 ♘xe5 gxf4 13 ♘xd7 0-0-0 (13...♗xd7 14 ♕d4 ♖g8 15 ♕e4+ ♗e7 has also been tried) 14 ♕d4 ♕xd7 15 ♕xf4 ♗d6 16 ♕c1! (16 ♕h6 ♕e6 is equal) 16...♔b8 (16...a5?! 17 0-0 ♗e5? 18 ♘b5! Kramnik-Morozevich, Monaco rapidplay 2002) 17 0-0 (Kramnik-Anand, Moscow rapidplay 2002) 17...h5!? 18 h4 ♕e6 19 ♖d1 ♖hg8, or 17 a5 a6 18 0-0 ♕e7 19 ♖a4 ♗c7 20 ♖h4 ♖hg8 (Kempinski-Morozevich, Bled Olympiad 2002) with a double-edged game in each case.

12 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 13 0-0 (also possible is 13 ♕d4!? f6 14 a5 or 13 a5, as in Gulko-Smyslov, Hastings 1988/89) **13...♗e7?!**

'In my preparations for the match I had considered this position to be acceptable for Black, but this evaluation turned out to be superficial. Alekhine refuted my defence, and not with some unexpected manoeuvres, but with a series of quiet moves.' (Euwe)

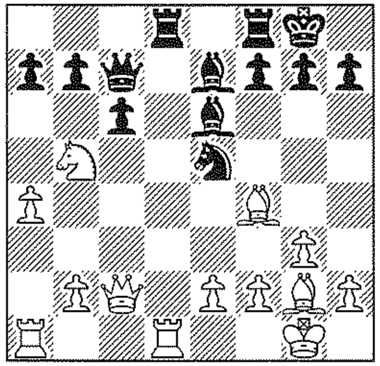
The game Capablanca-Euwe (Holland 9th matchgame 1931) went 13...♕a5?! 14 ♘e4! (not 14 ♕c2 f6 15 ♘e4 ♗b4 16 ♖fc1 ♖d8 17 h4 0-0 18 ♖d1 ♘c4 19 ♗h3 ♗f7 with equality Bogoljubow-Alekhine, San Remo 1930) 14...♖d8 15 ♕c2 ♗e7? (15...♗b4!? 16 ♘g5!) 16 b4! ♗xb4 17 ♕b2 f6, and here 18 ♖ab1! would have retained an obvious advantage. Therefore it is better to play 13...f6! (releasing the queen from the defence of the e5-knight) 14 ♕c2 ♕a5! 15 ♘e4 ♗b4 16 ♘d2 ♕c5 17 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♖fc1 ♗b4! 19 a5 0-0-0 20 ♘e4 a6 with approximate equality.



14 ♕c2!

Threatening ♘b5(-d4) or ♘d5. 14 a5!? a6 15 ♘e4 0-0 16 ♕c2 f6 17 ♘c5 was interesting.

14...♖d8 (14...♕a5 15 ♘b5!) **15 ♖fd1** (15 a5!?) **15...0-0 16 ♘b5**



16...♖xd1+?

Wrongly conceding the d-file. 16...♕b8 17 ♘d4 (17 ♘xa7 ♗f6! is unclear) 17...♗c8 was better.

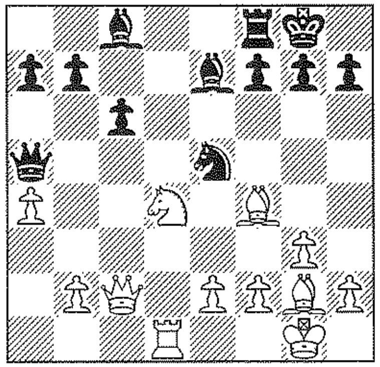
If 16...♕a5 Alekhine was planning 17 ♖xd8 (17 ♘d4!? ♗c8 18 ♘b3 ♕c7 19 a5) 17...♖xd8 18 ♗xe5 cxb5 19 ♗xb7 ♖d2 20 ♕c6 'with advantage' (the same variation is also given by Kotov), but after 20...♖xe2 21 ♗d6 (21 ♕e8+? ♗f8 22 ♗d6 ♖e1+!) 21...♗xd6 22 ♕xd6 ♖d2 the position is unclear: 23 ♕c5 ♖xb2 24 ♕e5 ♖d2 25 axb5 ♕b6 or 23 ♕e7 g6 24 ♕e8+ ♔g7 25 ♕xb5 ♕xb5 26 axb5 ♖xb2 27 ♗c6 ♗a2 with level chances in each instance. It would appear that more is promised by 20 ♕e4! b4 21 ♕e3 ♕d8 22 ♕xa7 ♖xe2 23 ♗d4 ♖d2 24 ♗b6 ♕d6 25 ♖c1 and a4-a5.

17 ♖xd1 ♕a5

Now after 17...♕b8 18 ♘d4 White has an obvious advantage: 18...♗c8? (18...♗g4?) 19 ♗xc6!, 18...♗d7 19 ♘f5!, or 18...♗f6 19 ♘xe6 fxe6 20 ♗h3 (20 ♗e4!?) 20...♖e8 21 b4 etc.

18 ♘d4 ♗c8

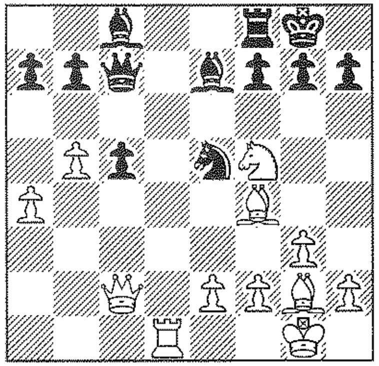
Here too, exploiting his lead in development, White lands a tactical blow that is typical of this variation.



19 b4! ♕c7

If 19...♗xb4 there would have followed 20 ♘b3 ♕c7 21 ♕c4! ♗c3 (21...♗d6 22 ♕d4! g5 23 ♗xg5 and Black's hopes are dashed) 22 ♖c1 ♗b2 (22...f5? 23 ♕e3! ♗b2 24 ♖c5 ♖e8 25 ♘d4 wins for White) 23 ♖c2 g5 (but not 23...f5? 24 ♕b4 winning) 24 ♗xg5 ♗a3 25 ♕f4 or 25 ♗f4 (after 25 ♗f6?! ♘g4 26 ♗a1 White has a strong attack, but correct is 25...♕d6! 26 ♗xe5 ♕d1+ 27 ♗f1 ♗h3 28 ♘d2 ♖d8 29 ♗d4 ♗b4 30 e3 ♗xd2 31 ♕d3 ♗xf1 equalising) with a powerful initiative.

20 b5 (achieving a decisive weakening of the d5-square) **20...c5 21 ♘f5**



'Alekhine was obviously nervous, lighting one cigarette after another and after a few drags putting them out in the ashtray. The Dutch player looked calmer. However, when with his 19th move the champion began an attack on the queenside, and then also initiated combinative play on the kingside, Euwe's ears turned crimson – a sign that was known to everyone: the grandmaster was in difficulties. And Alekhine, after making his move, got up from his seat and nervously circled the board like a bird of prey.' (Koblenz)

21...f6?!

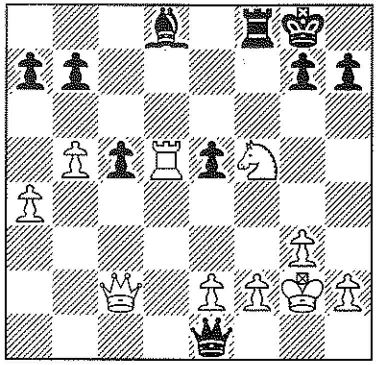
Yet another weakening, but it is hard to offer Black any good advice: if 21...♗f6, then 22 ♘d6 or 22 ♘e3 is possible, while if 21...♖e8 – 22 ♘e3, or 22 ♖d5, or 22 ♗e4.

22 ♘e3 ♗e6

Also unattractive is 22...g5 23 ♘d5 ♕d6 24 ♗e3 b6 (24...♖d8? 25 ♗xc5! ♕xc5 26 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 27 ♘xf6+ and ♖xd8) 25 a5 ♖d8 26 ♖d2 ♕e6 27 ♕e4.

23 ♗d5! ♗xd5 24 ♖xd5! (not with the knight, since the f5-square has been prepared for it) **24...♕a5** (if 24...♖d8 Alekhine gives

25 ♗xe5 fxe5 26 ♕f5, but the immediate 25 ♕f5 is even stronger) **25 ♘f5 ♕e1+ 26 ♔g2 ♗d8 27 ♗xe5 fxe5**



28 ♖d7! ♗f6 29 ♘h6+! ♔h8 30 ♕xc5 1-0

30...♖e8 31 ♕d5! (with the threat of 32 ♕g8+! ♖xg8 33 ♘f7 mate) 31...gxh6 32 ♕f7 and mate. A smattering of applause broke out in the hall...

'It was all over in less than three hours. Alekhine did not allow me to unravel my forces and very convincingly crushed my position. There was no struggle: I was deprived of all counter-chances, and my opponent simply inflicted an execution on me.' (Euwe) I have given this game here so that you could, firstly, see how mighty the opponent of the Dutch grandmaster was, and secondly, follow from the very start the heated discussion between the champion and the challenger in the Slav Defence: that was how the modern theory of this popular opening was being put together.

About how the match developed further, a very interesting account was given by Euwe himself:

'The opening – that was the real cause of my crushing defeat. As in the majority of his games in San Remo (1930), Alekhine immediately seized the initiative... The same happened in the third, fifth, seventh and ninth games, where my opponent played 1 e4 and I chose the French Defence. Alekhine punched a yawning gap in my opening repertoire. In my free time I diligently endeavoured to repair the breach, but each time new weak points in my defence appeared, and in my first five "Black" games I scored only half a point.

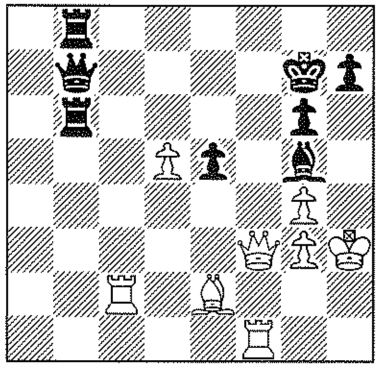
'To the same extent that I was unhappy with my play as Black, I was satisfied with the situation when playing White. The strange thing was I had not devoted particular attention to developing my opening repertoire with White, and I aimed merely for solid positions with some chances of seizing the initiative. Little by little it became clear that this type of position did not appeal to Alekhine! He did not like having to conduct a lengthy, patient defence, in order to minimise the disadvantages of his position and in the end gain a difficult draw.'

This already told in the nervy second game, full of mutual errors, which Tartakower wittily called a 'duel with Turkish daggers'.

Game 11

M.Euwe-A.Alekhine

World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 2nd game



39 ♖c6! ♖xc6?

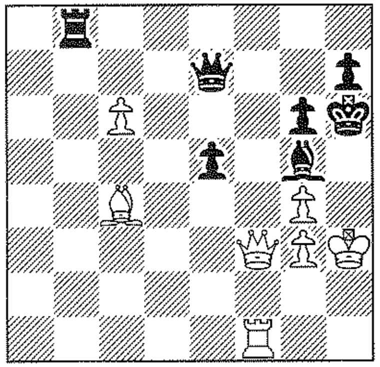
In time-trouble Black sharply increases the power of the enemy passed pawn. 39...♖b4?! 40 ♗a6 ♕a7 41 d6! is also dangerous, but after 39...♖b3! there appears to be no way for White to gain an advantage.

40 dxc6 ♕e7 41 ♗c4

Sealed. The threat is 42 ♕f7+ ♔h6 (42...♔h8) 43 ♗a6! and c6-c7. The adjournment session was short and highly spectacular.

41...♔h6

'Clearly bad were both 41...♖f8? 42 ♕xf8+ and 41...♗f6? 42 ♕xf6+ ♕xf6 43 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 44 ♗a6 etc., while if 41...♔h8 there would have followed 42 ♕d5! (with the threat of 43 ♖f7) 42...♖d8 43 ♕e6! e4 (*43...♕g7 44 ♗d5 – G.K.*) 44 ♖f7 ♕xe6 45 ♗xe6 e3 46 ♖f1 (46 c7? e2!!) 46...e2 47 ♖e1 ♖d1 48 c7 ♖xe1 49 c8♕+ ♔g7 50 ♕c3+ and wins.' (Euwe) I would add 42...♕g7 43 c7!, for example: 43...♕xc7 44 ♖f7 ♗e7 45 ♕e6 ♕d6 46 ♖xe7, or 43...♕h6+ 44 ♔g2 ♖b2+ 45 ♔f3 ♕f8+ 46 ♔e4 and wins.



42 ♕h1!

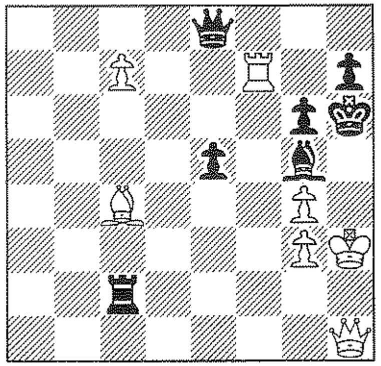
Much stronger than 42 ♕f7? ♖c8 43 ♗d5 ♖c7 with a solid defence. Now the threat is 43 ♖f7 and 44 ♔g2+ with mate.

42...♖b2 (42...♖f8 43 ♖xf8 ♕xf8 44 c7 ♕c8 45 ♕c6 wins) **43 ♖f7 ♕e8**

'This loses at once. The main variation was 43...♕c5 44 ♕d5! (threatening ♖xh7+! etc.) 44...♕xd5 45 ♗xd5 ♗e3! 46 c7 ♗g1 47 ♗g2! (47 g5+ ♔xg5 48 g4 looks attractive, but then follows 48...♖h2+ 49 ♔g3 ♖c2 50 ♗b7 ♗h2+ 51 ♔h3 ♗f4 or 51 ♔f3 e4+) 47...♖c2 48 ♔h4! g5+ (*or 48...♗e3 49 g5+ ♗xg5+ 50 ♔h3 ♖c3 51 ♗b7 ♗f4 52 c8♕ ♖xg3+ 53 ♔h2 ♖c3+ 54 ♔g2 ♖xc8 55 ♗xc8 – G.K.*) 49 ♔h3 ♗b6 (else White plays ♖xh7+ followed by ♗e4+) 50 ♖f6+ and wins.' (Euwe)

44 c7 (now the threat is ♕d5-e6) **44...♖c2**

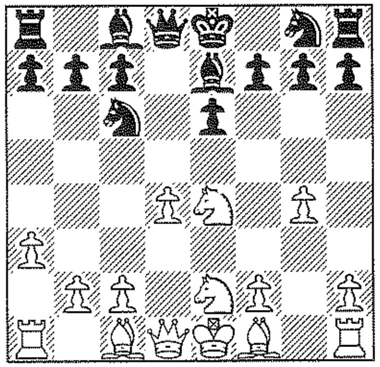
There is no salvation: 44...♕g8 (44...♖b4 45 ♔g2+ and mate) 45 ♕c6!, 44...e4 45 ♕a1!, or 44...♗e3 45 ♕e4 ♗g5 (45...♗g1 46 g5+ and 47 ♕h4 mate) 46 ♕d5!



45 ♕b7! 1-0

One of those 'long' moves that distinguished Euwe's style. The threat of 46 ♖xh7+ and c7-c8♕+ is irresistible. Black resigned, and the score became 1-1.

But for the champion this defeat was akin to a mosquito bite! As the Dutch press wrote, 'Alekhine assailed Euwe with a fury and self-confidence that had not been seen before in matches of such ranking.' He won the third, fourth (*Volume 1, Game No.141*) and the highly characteristic seventh game: **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♘e2 dxe4 5 a3 ♗e7 6 ♘xe4 ♘c6! 7 g4?!**



'An unwholesome, unaesthetic and violent move. Perhaps Alekhine wanted to show the chess world that for him everything was permitted?' (Flohr)

Present in the hall that day were the three oldest masters in the world: the 70-year-old Mieses, the 67-year-old Lasker and the 65-year-old Maróczy. After 7 g4?!, surrounded by a crowd of fans, Lasker muttered that Alekhine had gone too far. Tartakower, who was alongside, remembered the Latin saying: 'Answer force with force,' and then Lasker suggested 7...e5 with excellent counter-chances (I think that 7...♘f6! is even better). Alas, the depressed Euwe failed to cope with the unusual problems (*Volume 1, Game No.142*) and the score became 5-2 in Alekhine's favour.

The match resembled a game of cat and mouse, especially since Alekhine took with him to the hall... two cats nicknamed Lobeidah and Chess! 'Perhaps he wanted to disconcert me?' Euwe later recalled. 'In the second half of the match before every game he would let the cats onto the board, and they would sniff the pieces; sometimes he would even fuss over them during play. But I don't think that Alekhine intentionally did this with the aim of disturbing me. For him this was a way of distracting himself, or perhaps it gave him confidence. On one occasion he appeared in a sweater with the pattern of a cat... No, these jests didn't affect me, just like the other (which, I think, were also not premeditated) details of his behaviour. Thus he would often stand behind my back while I was thinking, or walk around the table, or slam doors, or drum with his fingers on the table. This didn't disturb me; I merely thought that he was stronger than me, and did he really need these additional measures in order to overcome me?'

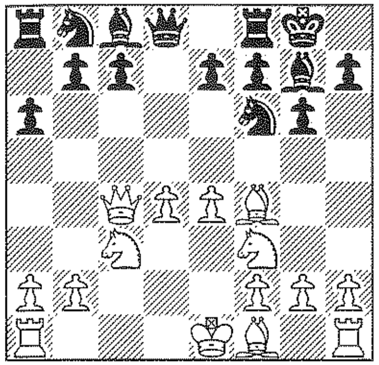
But in the second quarter of the match the challenger unexpectedly began to reduce the deficit, by regularly holding out with Black (against 1 e4 he gave up 1...e6 in favour of 1...e5) and winning with White. The champion did not want to defend! 'In the 10th game Euwe literally stunned those present by arriving in an excellent mood, fresh and rested. It was easy to notice the striking change in the moods of the two players: Euwe was full of energy and an implacable will to win, whereas Alekhine's head had obviously dropped and he was as though in a state of deep depression. When on the 29th move Alekhine touched his queen, his hand was shaking: he immediately noticed that he would lose the exchange and also the game. This defeat was the prelude to further difficult trials...' (Koblenz)

'On discovering any difficulties, Alekhine preferred to stake everything,' writes Euwe. 'This is why, on encountering solid positions in the even-numbered games, he began playing in reckless style, which brought him a win in the fourth game and almost brought a win in the sixth. My objective with White was clear: after achieving a slight advantage, I had to resist in the tactical complications. Of course, this was not easy against a player of such class, but, on the other hand, it did not seem impracticable: after all, the tactical complications were created in positions that were favourable for me. That is, I was playing as though with a favourable wind... My new tactics were crowned with complete success. In the 12th and 14th games Alekhine again played extremely riskily (*it would be more accurate to say, simply terribly – G.K.*), and to win it was sufficient for me to make only two or three genuinely good moves.'

Just before the start of the next game Alekhine optimistically declared: 'I once again feel fine and today I will give my all, since I want to win.' Let us see what became of this.

Game 12
M.Euwe-A.Alekhine
World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 12th game
Grünfeld Defence D97

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♕b3 dxc4 5 ♕xc4 ♗g7 6 e4 0-0 7 ♘f3 a6 8 ♗f4 (at present the sharp 8 e5 ♘fd7 9 e6 fxe6 10 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 11 ♘g5 is also being tried)



8...b5!?

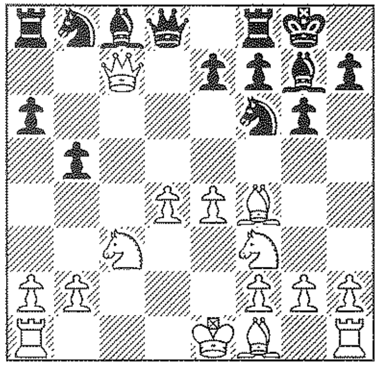
For a long time question marks were attached to Black's seventh and eighth moves. In his novel *Belye i chernye* (White and Black) grandmaster Kotov uses his artistic licence to suggest that Alekhine was drunk when he played the game, and after writing 8...c6 on his scoresheet he suddenly picked up the b7-pawn.

'How terrible!' writes Kotov. 'It was just like with Pushkin: instead of the ace, the queen of spades. A crude oversight, not even an oversight, he simply picked up the wrong pawn, he got confused... And now the c7-pawn remains undefended, it is lost without any compensation. To pick up the wrong piece! This was delirium!... Alekhine's drunkenness immediately left him, when he saw what a mistake he had made. It was not just that he lost a pawn; Black's position immediately became hopeless.'

This is how legends are born! In fact, according to the main eye-witness – Euwe, 'Alekhine did not drink at all during the first half of the match,' and besides, 8...b5!? is by no means a blunder, but a genuine revelation: in the 1970s this fully correct pawn sacrifice received the name of the 'Hungarian Variation'. Intuitively Alekhine was right!

9 ♕xc7

'Black faced a dismal choice: to agree to a lost endgame a pawn down, or to keep the queens on. Alekhine chose the latter...' (Kotov)



9...♕e8?

Only this is a mistake. The point is that the endgame a pawn down is by no means lost: 9...♕xc7! 10 ♗xc7 ♗b7 11 e5 ♘d5 with approximate equality, as shown by games from the end of the 20th century. But with the queens on Black does indeed have no compensation for the material deficit.

10 ♗e2 ♘c6 (10...b4 11 ♘d5) **11 d5 ♘b4?** (11...e5 was nevertheless better) **12 0-0 ♘xe4?!**

Desperation: 12...♘c2 13 ♖ac1 b4 14 ♘b1! wins for White.

13 ♘xe4 ♘xd5 14 ♕c1 ♗f5 15 ♘g3 ♖c8 16 ♕d2 ♘xf4 17 ♕xf4 ♗c2 (17...♗xb2 18 ♘xf5 ♗xa1 19 ♕h6! with inevitable mate after ♘g5) **18 ♕b4**, and White won easily, after spending only an hour and a half on the game.

The 13th game, which took place on Alekhine's birthday, was a very important one. The champion played 1 e4 and the challenger replied with the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez. On the 11th move White provocatively and audaciously sacrificed his central pawn, provoking great complications. Euwe was on the point of achieving a won position, but lost his advantage in a fierce struggle.

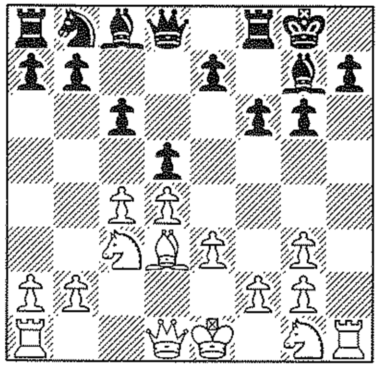
'That day the grandmasters resembled two boxers, exhausted by a long fight, who in their groggy state could barely keep standing and were blindly swinging their fists. Such a change of mood on the faces of the spectators – from fits of delight to the deepest disillusionment and sadness – was something that I had never observed before; they had something to be upset about...' (Koblenz) During the resumption the champion unexpectedly committed a terrible blunder, but Euwe did not notice the winning move and soon he himself offered a draw.

There was clearly something wrong with Alekhine, as the next game, the 14th, eloquently demonstrates.

Game 13
M.Euwe-A.Alekhine
World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 14th game
Grünfeld Defence D82

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♗f4 ♘h5? (4...♗g7!) **5 ♗e5 f6 6 ♗g3 ♘xg3 7 hxg3 c6 8 e3 ♗g7 9 ♗d3** (9 cxd5!? cxd5 10 ♗d3 f5 11 g4! – Euwe) **9...0-0??**

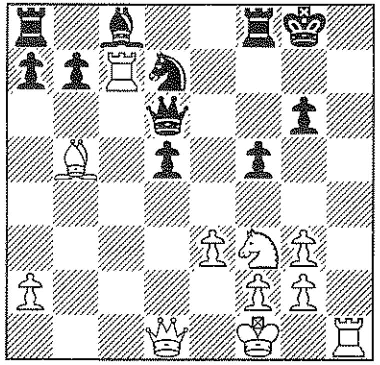
But this is indeed a blunder: directly into a mate!



10 ♖xh7!

Just as in a simultaneous display... Regarding this, Tartakower joked that the two players were evidently in a hurry to return to Amsterdam, where a football match between Holland and Denmark was taking place that evening.

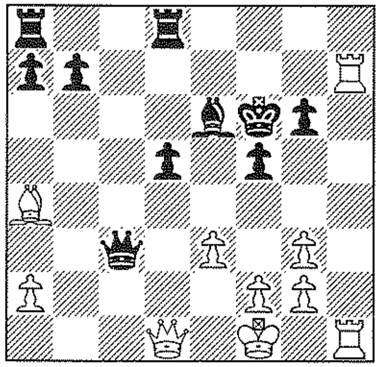
10...f5 (of course, not 10...♔xh7? 11 ♕h5+ ♔g8 12 ♗xg6) **11 ♖h1 e5 12 dxe5 ♗xe5 13 ♘f3 ♗xc3+?! 14 bxc3 ♕f6 15 cxd5! ♕xc3+ 16 ♔f1 ♕f6 17 ♖c1 cxd5 18 ♖c7 ♘d7 19 ♗b5! ♕d6** (19...♘b6 20 ♖hh7!)



20 ♖c4?!

The sacrifice of the other rook would have been immediately decisive – 20 ♕d4! ♕xc7 (20...♘f6 21 ♖hh7!) 21 ♖h8+ ♔f7 22 ♘g5+ ♔e7 (22...♔e8 23 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 24 ♘e6+) 23 ♖h7+ ♔e8 (23...♔d6 24 ♕f4+!) 24 ♕xd5 ♕c1+ 25 ♔e2 ♕b2+ 26 ♔f3 (Euwe).

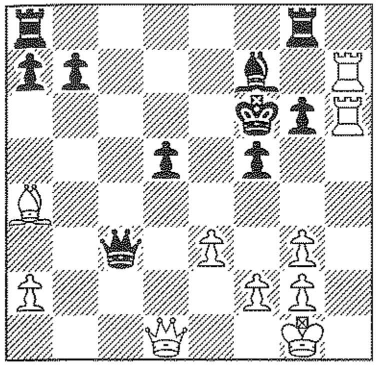
20...♘f6 21 ♖ch4 ♕c5 22 ♗a4 ♕c3 (or 22...♗e6 23 ♘g5 ♗f7 24 ♕a1 d4 25 ♖xd4) **23 ♘g5 ♔g7 24 ♘h7 ♖d8 25 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 26 ♖h7 ♗e6**



27 ♖1h6!

But not 27 ♖xb7 d4! with counterplay.

27...♗f7 28 ♔g1 ♖g8



29 g4!, and White, albeit not without some anxiety, went on to win. Alekhine never again employed the Grünfeld Defence against Euwe...

To the astonishment of the chess world, the scores were now equal: 7-7. Alekhine was terribly worn out by the endless travelling from town to town, far more so than his young and physically well-prepared opponent. But the main thing, according to Euwe, was that in this part of the match the champion was not quite himself: 'He never seriously thought that he could lose the match, but here the opening weapon was knocked out of his hand and he proved vulnerable... Alekhine was in a nervous state. Faced with the threat of losing his title, he lost his former self-confidence.'

At this difficult moment Alekhine showed himself to be a true champion. In the train from Groningen to Baarn, before the 15th game, he said to Lasker: 'I will play more solidly. More logic and less recklessness.' The following day Lasker revealed to the public: 'Alekhine has come to his senses. The match is entering a new phase. Now Alekhine will fight like a simple soldier, and not as a god or magician. He will again become the former Alekhine. Because of his faulty approach to this match and the resulting defeats, he has suffered a heavy moral blow and lost his usual sense of position.'

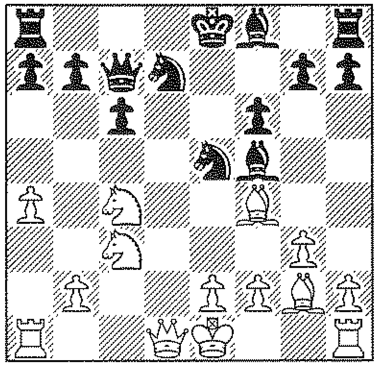
In the next five games Alekhine scored two wins (one of them with Black, which had a considerable psychological effect, since both players won mainly with White) with three draws, and before the 20th game he was leading 10½-8½. To retain his title he needed to gain 4½ points from 11, a task that seemed easily achievable. In order to change the course of the match, the challenger was desperate for a win. And Euwe again showed himself to be a splendid fighter.

Game 14
M.Euwe-A.Alekhine
World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 20th game
Slav Defence D17

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♗f5

In the 19th game Euwe chose the specially prepared, but dubious variation 5...e6? 6 e4 ♗b4, following in the footsteps of Bogoljubow (*Volume 1, Game No.131*), and he was equally severely punished.

6 ♘e5 (6 e3 – *Game No.21*) **6...♘bd7** (6...e6) **7 ♘xc4 ♕c7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗f4 ♘fd7 11 ♗g2 f6**



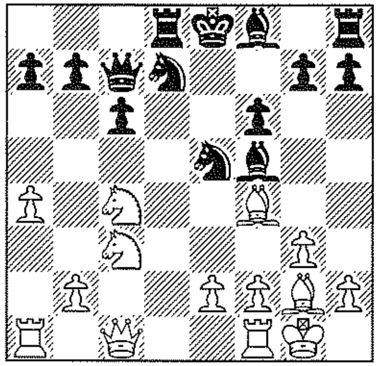
Correcting the mistake of the opening game of the match: 11...♗e6?! (*Game No.10*). An equivalent continuation is 11...♖d8, while the most energetic, as already mentioned, is 11...g5!?

12 0-0 ♖d8

By that time it was known from Capablanca's games that in the event of 12...♗e6 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 14 ♗e3 ♗c5 (14...♗e7?! 15 a5 a6 16 ♕c2 0-0 17 ♖fd1 ♖ae8 18 ♘d5!) 15 ♘e4 ♗xe3 16 fxe3 White retains some advantage.

A modern attempt is 12...♘c5!? 13 e4 ♗g6 14 ♗xe5 fxe5 15 f4 ♖d8 (Sakaev-Morozevich, Kishinev 1998), or 13 ♘e3!? ♗e6 (13...♗g6 14 b4 ♘e6 15 b5 ♖d8 16 ♕b3 ♗f7 17 ♗xe5 fxe5 18 bxc6 bxc6 19 ♖ab1 ♗c5 20 ♕b7 ♕xb7 21 ♖xb7 0-0 22 ♗xc6 favours White, Lastin-Skatchkov, Bor 2000) 14 b4 ♖d8 15 ♕c2 ♘a6 16 b5 ♘b4 with sharp play.

13 ♕c1



'Here one sees the difference between the two lines of play: Black's bishop has not yet retreated to e6, hence White cannot play his queen to c2 and must content himself with the somewhat inferior post c1. Very likely it was this consideration that induced Alekhine to adopt the same defence against which he had achieved so very handsome a victory (with the white pieces) in the first game of the match.' (Euwe)

13...♕b8?

A serious loss of time. Also 13...♗e7? 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♘d5! is bad here. As was shown by subsequent practice, 13...♗e6! is correct (*Game Nos.15 and 20*).

14 ♘e4 ♗e7 15 ♕c3 0-0 16 ♖ad1 ♗e6

'Rather late in the day; White now seizes the advantage with a little combination.' (Euwe)

17 ♘xe5

Avoiding the clever trap 17 ♖xd7?! ♖xd7 18 ♘xe5 fxe5 19 ♗xe5 (hoping for 20 ♗xg7) 19...♗b4! and Black has nothing to complain about: 20 ♗xb8 ♗xc3 21 ♘c5 (21 ♗d6 ♖e8! 22 bxc3 ♗f5! 23 ♘c5 ♖xd6 24 ♘xb7 ♖d2 etc.) 21...♗xb2 22 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 23 ♗xa7 ♖a8 24 ♖d1 ♗f5 25 ♗d4 ♗c2 with a probable draw.

17...♘xe5 (17...fxe5 18 ♗c3!) **18 ♘g5!**

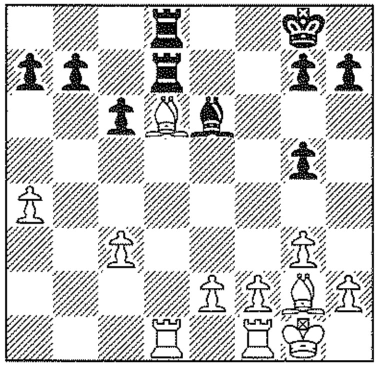
Disclosing the disharmony in the placing of the black pieces. 'This secures White the two bishops, no matter how his opponent plays; incidentally, it should be noted that Black must not permit the exchange of his extremely important queen's bishop. The value of this piece derives from the fact that the light squares have been weakened somewhat by ...f7-f6.' (Euwe)

18...fxg5?

18...♗f7 was essential, but Alekhine once again avoids the passive defence which he would have had to conduct after 19 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 20 ♗h3 ♖ff8, and hopes to solve his problems with the help of tactical tricks.

19 ♗xe5 ♗f6! 20 ♗xb8 ♗xc3 21 ♗d6 ♖f7 22 bxc3 ♖fd7

The point of Alekhine's counter-combination, but Euwe is prepared for this turn of events.



23 ♖b1! (winning an important pawn) **23...♖xd6 24 ♖xb7 ♖8d7**

Objectively the endgame is lost for Black, but if he can attack the weak white pawns he will retain drawing chances, in view also of the limited material remaining.

25 ♖xd7?!

Should this active rook have been exchanged? 'The alternative to be considered was 25 ♖b8+ ♔f7 26 f4, but then Black replies 26...g4 and with two rooks apiece he has greater prospects of counterplay than after the text.' (Euwe) But in my opinion, after 27 ♖c8 or 27 ♗e4 White has a technically won position.

25...♗xd7 26 ♗e4?!

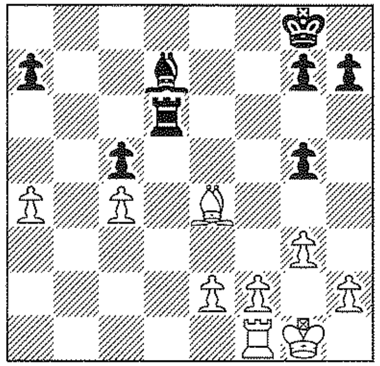
In my view, 26 ♖b1 is more natural.

26...c5?!

'If 26...♖d2, then 27 ♗d3, and 27...♖a2? fails to 28 ♗c4+.' (Euwe) However, Black missed an interesting chance – 27...♗h3!? 28 ♖b1 g4!, shutting in both his own bishop, and the enemy king. Because of the weakness of White's back rank, the win would have become problematic.

27 c4!?

White gives up defending his weak pawn and plays for domination! According to Euwe, 'There was a simpler move in 27 ♗c2, so that if 27...♖d2 28 ♗b3+ and 29 ♖d1.' However, in the bishop ending after 29...♖xd1+ 30 ♗xd1 a5! the weakness of the a4-pawn would have made things difficult for White.



27...♗xa4?

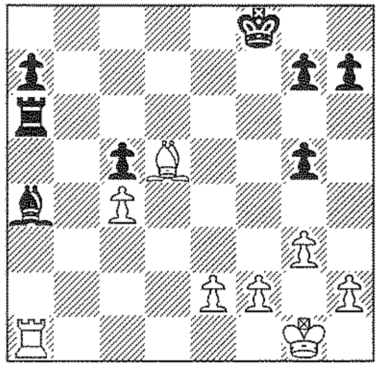
Nerves, nerves... Such pawn-grabbing is altogether atypical of Alekhine, but in the given instance he missed White's 30th move. Of course, he should have activated his rook. If 27...♖a6 Euwe gives 28 ♖b1 ♖xa4 29 ♖b8+ ♔f7 30 ♗xh7, but 28...h6! is more tenacious. It is also not easy for White to win after 27...♖d2 28 ♗d5+ ♔f8 29 ♖b1 ♖xe2 30 ♖b7, for example:

1) 30...♖e1+ (weaker is 30...♗xa4?! 31 ♖f7+ ♔e8, and here not Euwe's move 32 ♖xa7 because of 32...♗d7!, but 32 ♖xg7! and only then the capture of the a-pawn) 31 ♔g2 ♖e7 32 a5 ♗a4 33 a6 g4 with drawing chances;

2) 30...♗h3 31 f4! (Euwe only considers 31 ♖f7+ ♔e8 32 f4, which allows 32...♖e7! 33 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 34 fxg5 a5 equalising) 31...gxf4 (31...♖e7 32 ♖b8+ ♖e8 33 ♖b5!, but not 33 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 34 fxg5 a5! with a level game) 32 ♖xa7 fxg3 33 hxg3 ♗c6, also with drawing chances.

28 ♗d5+ ♔f8 29 ♖a1 ♖a6

Of course, both 29...♗c6? 30 ♖a6 or 29...♗d7 30 ♖xa7 are very bad for Black. Instead of this Black wants to escape from the unpleasant pin and obtain an equal endgame by 30...♗b5!

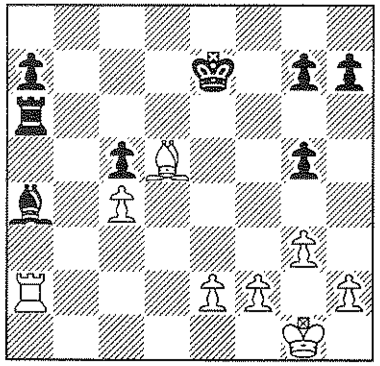


30 ♖a2!!

A surprise! This quiet move kills all Black's hopes: now 30...♗b5? is not possible, since after 31 cxb5 the rook at a2 is defended. Thus the bishop comes under a mortal pin. 'Black's pieces are crippled, and he is thus helpless against the advance of White's pawn majority on the kingside.' (Euwe)

30...♔e7?!

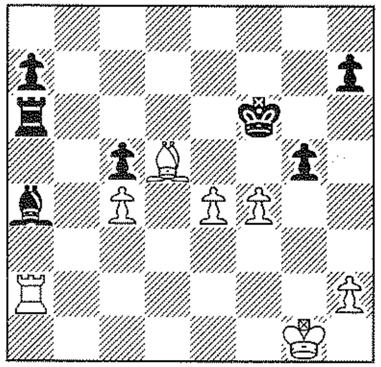
Equivalent to capitulation. 30...g4! would nevertheless have prevented the immediate creation of a passed pawn in the centre and made things rather more difficult for White.



31 f4! gxf4 32 gxf4 ♔f6

Running to the queenside – 32...♔d6 33 e4 ♔c7 was hopeless in view of 34 ♔f2 ♔b6 35 ♖b2+ ♔a5 36 ♖b7!, while 32...♖g6+ 33 ♔f2 ♗d7 would have saved Black from the pin, but not from defeat: 34 ♖xa7 ♖h6 35 ♔g3 ♖g6+ 36 ♔f3 ♖h6 37 e4 ♖xh2 38 e5 ♔d8 39 e6 with the victorious advance of the e-pawn.

33 e4 g5



34 f5!

Two passed pawns are better than one, especially since the attempt to blockade them proves illusory. However, according to Euwe, 34 e5+ would also have won.

34...h5 35 h4! gxh4 36 ♔h2 ♔g5 37 ♔h3 ♖a5 (desperation) **38 ♗b7!**

In this position 38 ♗c6 ♗xc6 39 ♖xa5 ♗xe4 is no longer sufficient for White!

38...♔f6 39 ♗d5 ♔g5 40 ♗b7 (repeating moves before the time control) **40...♔f6 41 ♗c8! 1-0**

The sealed move, which Euwe did not even keep secret. That same evening Black resigned: 41...♔g5 42 e5 or 41...♔e5 42 ♔xh4 ♔xe4 43 f6 and wins.

Under the strong impression made by 30 ♖a2!! Alekhine called this the best game of the match(?!), although the move 13...♕b8? devalues its opening significance. In the very next game, the 21st, Euwe demonstrated the correct way for Black, showing himself to be a move ahead of his opponent in his opening analysis.

This to some extent historic battle, which took place on 19th November (Capablanca's birthday!), was accompanied by an incident that influenced the outcome of the game and the match as a whole, and hence the fate of the world chess crown.

As is known, the match was played without any postponements, and in its second half the extremely tired Alekhine 'reduced the tension' with the help of alcohol, permitting himself a few glasses of cognac. Later he told Flohr that he had sought the optimum dose: after drinking a glass to keep up his spirits and winning, he decided to drink a little more and... lost. 'To the end of the match he was not in fact able to establish what his organism wanted: to drink or not to drink,' Flohr sums up. But in general the rumours about his chronic alcoholism very strongly exaggerated. In the words of Euwe, 'since Alekhine, despite being short-sighted, flatly refused to wear glasses, he made his move with a shaky hand, and this gave the impression that he was drunk, although he was as sober as a judge.'

But in the 21st game something different happened. For this encounter they had to travel from Amsterdam to Ermelo. Play was due to start at six in the evening, and by half past one the organisers should have sent a car for Alekhine. For some reason the car was 45 minutes late, which upset the champion. He decided to travel by train and demanded that he be taken to the station. But the appropriate train had already left, and he had to wait for the next one. When Alekhine arrived late in Ermelo, he smelled strongly of spirits... The start of the game was postponed by an hour. Alekhine felt rather unwell, to put it mildly, and he requested that the game be postponed to the following day, but Kmoch, expressing the opinion of Euwe and the organisers, replied: 'There are two thousand spectators waiting in the hall, they won't understand!' And the champion submitted to the arbiter's decision, declaring that he was playing the game under moral pressure. In reply it was suggested to him that they should summon a doctor, who would decide whether the world champion was in a fit state to play the next game. But Alekhine rejected the services of a doctor.

It stands to reason that the challenger, shrouded in alcohol vapour, was also not himself. 'If it is asserted that the content of this game suffered from external factors,' wrote the Dutch press, 'then it is Euwe who must be considered the main victim: the "active" disturber of the psychological equilibrium always has an advantage' (cf. the Spassky-Fischer match, 1972). Was Alekhine so drunk that the quality of his play suffered?' Well, judge for yourself...

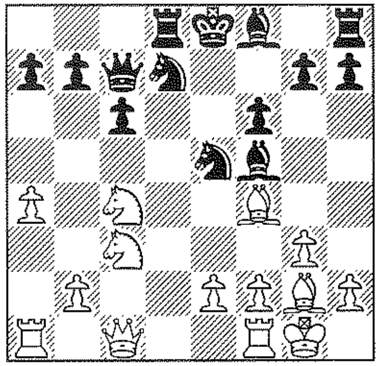
Game 15
A.Alekhine-M.Euwe
World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 21st game
Slav Defence D17

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 a4

In the 23rd game Alekhine tried 5 e3 b5 6 a4 b4 7 ♘b1 (7 ♘a2 – *Game No.85*) 7...♗a6 8 ♗e2 e6 9 ♘e5 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘xc4?! (11 ♘d2!), and after 11...c5! 12 dxc5 ♘bd7 13 c6 ♘c5 14 ♘bd2 ♕c7 15 ♕c2 ♖ad8 Black obtained the better game.

5...♗f5 6 ♘e5 ♘bd7 7 ♘xc4 ♕c7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗f4 ♘fd7 11 ♗g2 ♖d8 (11...♗e6?! was seen in *Game No.10*) **12 ♕c1 f6 13 0-0**

The champion copies his opponent's play from the preceding game, but the latter has prepared an improvement.



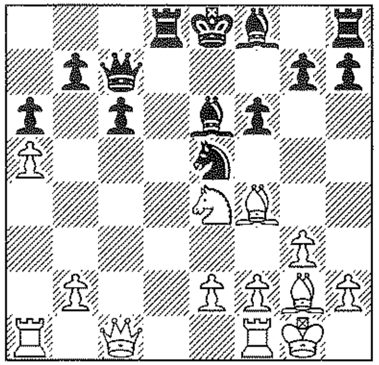
13...♗e6! (instead of 13...♕b8? – *Game No.14*) **14 ♘xe5**

Alekhine so liked the manoeuvre 13...♗e6, that in the opening game of the 1937 return match he played this variation as Black. But Euwe again forestalled him, by replying 14 ♘e4! (*Game No.20*).

14...♘xe5 15 a5?!

At a5 the pawn becomes an appreciable weakness. Better was the immediate 15 ♘e4 with the threat of 16 ♘c5, and if 15...♕a5?!, then 16 ♗d2 ♗b4 17 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 18 ♕f4! ♕e7 (18...♗c4? 19 b3!) 19 ♕e3 a6 20 ♘c5 ♗c8 21 b4 ♘f7 22 ♖a3! ♘d6 23 ♖d1 with persistent positional pressure (Levenfish-Flohr, Moscow 1936).

15...a6 (according to eye-witnesses, Alekhine drank a lot of coffee during the game, while after his 10th and 15th moves Euwe went out of the hall – apparently for a breath of fresh air) **16 ♘e4**



16...♗b4!

'An important move, for the bishop is very strongly posted here. If 16...♗e7 instead, there could follow 17 ♘c5 ♗c8 18 ♕c3 0-0 19 ♕b3+.' (Euwe)

17 ♘c5

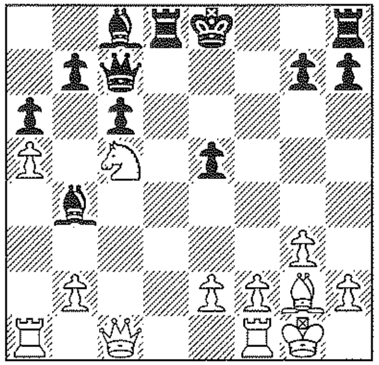
Later 17 ♗d2 was tried: 17...♗xd2 (more precise than 17...♕e7?! 18 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 19 ♕c5! ♕xc5 20 ♘xc5 ♗c8 21 ♖fd1 ♔e7 22 b3, as in Eliskases-Capablanca, Semmering-Baden 1937) 18 ♘xd2 0-0 19 ♕c3 ♕d6 20 ♘e4 ♕d4 21 ♘c5 ♗c8 22 ♕b3+ ♕c4 ½-½ (Fine-Capablanca, Semmering-Baden 1937).

17...♗c8 (also acceptable is 17...♗xc5 18 ♕xc5 ♕e7, and even 17...♗d5 with the idea of 18 e4 ♗f7 19 ♖a4 ♖d4!, as was seen much later in Quinteros-Hort, Buenos Aires 1980) **18 ♗xe5?!**

The first step towards ruin. Alekhine is in a militant mood, but the position does not give White sufficient grounds for drastic action. Also incorrect is 18 ♖a4? ♗xa5 19 ♘d3 0-0 20 ♗e4 ♗b6 21 ♕c2 g5! 22 ♗xh7+ ♕xh7 23 ♗xe5 ♗a7! (Vidmar-Euwe, Nottingham 1936).

18 ♘d3 was quieter. Euwe condemned it in view of 18...♘xd3 (after 18...♗xa5 19 ♘xe5 fxe5 there is either the modest 20 ♕e3 ♗d2 21 ♕xe5+ ♕xc5 22 ♗xe5 with a slightly inferior, but drawn ending, or 20 ♗g5!? with compensation for the pawn) 19 ♗xc7 (19 exd3 ♕e7!) 19...♘xc1 'with a clear advantage for Black', although it seems to me that after 20 ♖axc1 ♖d7 (20...♖d2 21 ♖fd1!) 21 ♗b6 ♔f7 22 ♖fd1 the position is roughly equal.

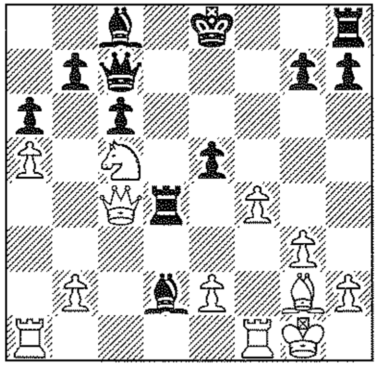
18...fxe5 (also possible is 18...♕xe5 19 ♘d3 ♕b5 with equality, but not 19...♕e7? 20 ♖a4!)



19 f4?!

'The consequence of his previous move. 19 ♕c4 would be answered by 19...♖d4,' writes Euwe (*although after 20 ♕c1! White is alright – G.K.*). 'After 19 ♘d3 Black could play 19...♗xa5 20 ♕c5 ♗b6 21 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 22 ♘xe5 ♗d4.' The two bishops guarantee him somewhat the better endgame.

19...♗d2! (19...0-0?? 20 ♕c4+) **20 ♕c4** (20 ♕c2 0-0!) **20...♖d4**

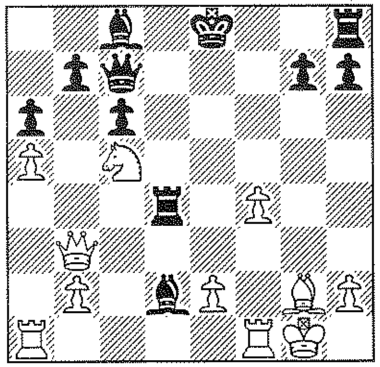


21 ♕b3?!

21 ♘e6? ♕f7! is bad for White, for example: 22 ♗xc6+ bxc6 23 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 24 ♕a8+ ♔e7 25 ♕xh8 ♗e3+ 26 ♔g2 ♗xe6. But the following line would appear to be slightly more tenacious: 21 ♕c2 exf4 22 ♘b3 ♗e3+ 23 ♔h1 ♖b4 24 gxf4 ♕f7 25 ♘d2 0-0 26 ♕c3 ♗xd2 27 ♕xd2 ♖xf4.

21...exf4 22 gxf4?!

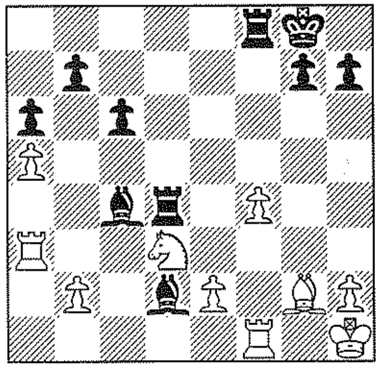
'22 ♔h1 would have been stronger, for Black could not have played 22...fxg3 without exposing himself to a dangerous attack. 22...♕e7! would still have been the best reply.' (Euwe)



22...♕e7! (this soon leads to simplification advantageous to Black) **23 ♘d3 ♗e6**

'Inviting was 23...♕xe2 24 ♖ae1 ♗e3+ 25 ♔h1 ♖xd3. But White plays 24 ♖fe1 ♗e3+ 25 ♔h1 ♖xd3 26 ♕a4! ♕d2 27 ♖ad1 etc.' (Euwe)

24 ♕a3 (if 24 ♕c2, then 24...♗e3+ 25 ♔h1 0-0 and Black has excellent attacking chances) **24...♗c4! 25 ♔h1 ♕xa3 26 ♖xa3 0-0**



The outcome is an ending with an enormous advantage for Black: he has two mighty bishops and White's position is in ruins. And the challenger confidently concludes the game.

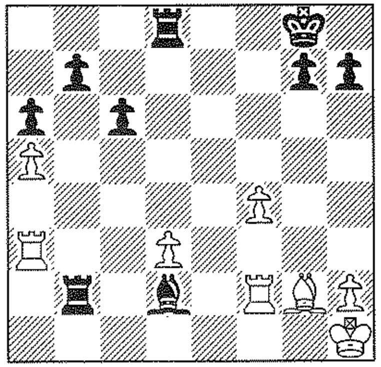
27 ♖a4

'This pin on the c4-bishop leads to nothing, and next move the rook returns to a3. But it is questionable whether White has anything better; he cannot undertake anything and must pursue a waiting policy, taking his cue from Black's moves.' (Euwe)

27...♖fd8 28 ♖a3

The seemingly tempting 28 ♘c5? would have been refuted by 28...♗xe2 29 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 30 ♖f2 ♗e3! (Euwe suggested 30...♗c4 with the threat of ...♗e3) 31 ♖xe2 ♖d1+ 32 ♗f1 ♖xf1+ 33 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 34 ♔f3 ♗xc5 winning.

28...♗xd3 29 exd3 (or 29 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 30 exd3 ♗xa5 and wins) **29...♖b4!** (dashing White's faint hope of 29...♖xd3?! 30 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 31 ♖d1 with drawing chances) **30 ♖f2 ♖xb2**



31 ♗f1

31 ♗e4! was more tenacious, for example: 31...♖b1+ 32 ♔g2 ♗e3 33 ♖f3 ♖g1+?! 34 ♔h3 ♖d6 35 ♖g3! with some counterplay; therefore Euwe recommended 33...♖b2+! 34 ♔g3 ♗g1 etc.

31...♖d4 32 f5 ♖f4 33 ♖xf4 ♗xf4 34 h3 ♗d6 35 ♖a1 ♔f7 36 d4

'White must attempt to get his bishop into the game, else Black's king simply advances. Note that Black is careful to keep his rook on the b-file, in order to shield the b7-pawn from attack.' (Euwe)

36...♔f6 37 ♖e1 ♗b4 38 ♖a1 ♖d2 39 ♗c4 ♖xd4 40 ♗e6 ♖d8 (preventing ♗c8 and threatening 41...g6) **41 ♗b3 0-1**

The sealed move. Without waiting for 41...♖d3, White resigned.

A heavy blow for the champion: two successive defeats in a crucial theoretical duel – with both Black and White. In this match, for virtually the first time in history, the two players began playing the opening with extensive accuracy, the value of every move being very high, and Alekhine failed twice in succession. I think that this was a shock for him... Especially since Euwe had again levelled the scores (10½-10½), for the first time overcoming the 'colour barrier' by winning with Black and thereby gaining revenge for the missed chances that occurred in the 13th and 15th games.

The next game, the 22nd, turned into a friendly anti-alcoholic encounter: Alekhine brought a bottle of apple juice with him, poured it into two glasses, and the players promptly drained them. Smiles, a murmur of approval from the spectators and... a draw on the 18th move.

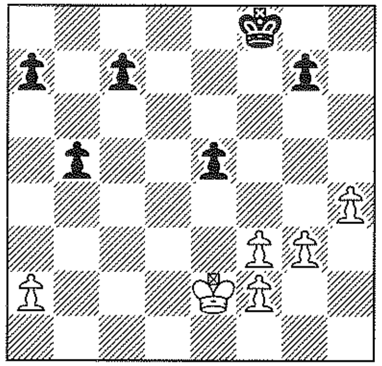
The excitement surrounding the match now reached fever pitch. Countless crowds of fans arrived from different towns in special 'Euwe-Alekhine' buses... In the 23rd game Alekhine made a mistake in the opening and was totally outplayed, and by the 27th move Black had a technically won endgame with an extra pawn. However, Euwe lost his advantage and the game ended in a draw on the resumption.

The 24th game was even more dramatic – a genuine comedy (or tragedy?) of errors. As in the successful last game of his training match with Euwe (1926/27), Alekhine chose the Dutch Defence and managed to confuse his opponent. As a result, the latter made a blunder: he could have gone into a drawn pawn endgame, but he went into a lost one! But the champion, in turn, advanced the wrong pawn...

Game 16

M.Euwe-A.Alekhine

World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 24th game



32...c5??

One of the key moments of the match: Alekhine throws away a 100% win! The dreadful thing is that on that evening he was completely sober and had plenty of time on the clock...

He could have easily won by 32...a5! (the outside pawn!) 33 ♔d3 a4 34 ♔c3 c5 35 g4 ♔e7, for example: 36 ♔d3 (if 36 h5 ♔f6 then ...♔g5-f4 and ...e5-e4; and if 36 g5 ♔e6 or 36...b4+ 37 ♔d3 g6 38 ♔c4 ♔e6 39 ♔d3 b3) 36...♔d6 37 ♔c3 ♔d5 38 a3 ♔e6 39 ♔d3 ♔d6 40 ♔c3 ♔d5 41 ♔d3 b4 42 axb4 cxb4 43 ♔c2 ♔c4 44 ♔b2 (44 h5 ♔d5) 44...a3+ 45 ♔a2 ♔c3 and Black wins.

33 ♔e3! ½-½

After the sequel 33...a5 34 f4 exf4+ 35 ♔xf4 b4 36 ♔e3 c4 37 ♔d4 c3 38 ♔d3 ♔f7 39 f4 ♔e6 40 g4 g6 41 ♔c2 it is a draw. This blow shattered the exhausted champion: with a win he would again have taken the lead and would have had every chance of retaining his title. As Euwe expressed it, 'things would probably have taken a completely different turn.'

The score in the match became a customary one for the second half of the 20th century: 12-12. But this was not the final outcome – the main drama was only beginning.

'The tension had now become unbearable for the world champion,' wrote Dutch journalists. 'He began seeking explanations in mysticism and ordered his horoscope. For the second time in the match (and this time finally) his second, Landau, was dismissed, giving way to Ernst Klein who was specially summoned from Austria.' However, the shock caused by his error in a simple endgame had not gone away and, in Euwe's opinion, this was the cause of Alekhine's defeat in the 25th game, in which he again played too riskily.

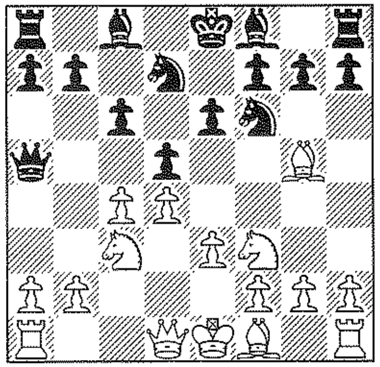
For the first time the challenger chose the 'Cambridge Springs' for this game, to which the champion replied with a very sharp variation involving the sacrifice of two pawns and... lost practically without a fight! The variation proved to have a 'hole'; Euwe had looked at it in his preparations and was familiar with Becker's analysis, refuting an idea suggested by Ilya Rabinovich, which, to his misfortune, Alekhine employed.

Game 17

A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 25th game
Queen's Gambit Declined D52

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 ♘bd7 6 e3 ♕a5



7 cxd5!?

A far quieter alternative is 7 ♘d2, which was tested several times in the Capablanca-Alekhine match (*Volume 1, Game Nos.104, 106 and 125*).

7...♘xd5 8 ♕d2 ♘7b6

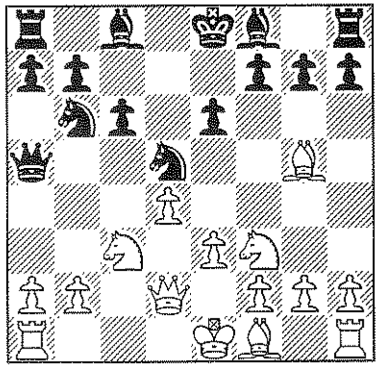
White would be quite happy with 8...♗b4 9 ♖c1, for example:

1) 9...h6 (9...f6 10 ♗h4) 10 ♗h4 0-0 11 ♗c4! (11 ♗d3 e5 was seen in the Alekhine-Bogoljubow match, Germany/Holland 1929) 11...♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗a3 13 ♖b1 e5 14 ♗g3 exd4 15 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 16 ♘xd2 ♘b6 17 ♗b3 ♗f5 18 e4 ♖ae8 19 f3 (Alekhine-Nimzowitsch, Zürich 1934);

2) 9...c5 10 e4 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♗a3 12 ♖b1 0-0 13 ♗d3, as in the first variation, with a plus (Euwe-Mitchell, Hastings 1934/35);

3) 9...e5 10 a3! ♗d6 (10...♗xc3 11 bxc3 exd4 12 cxd4 ♕xa3 13 e4 ♘5f6 14 ♗d3 h6 15 ♗h4 0-0 16 0-0 ♖e8 17 ♕c2 is not without danger) 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 b4 ♗xc3 14 ♕xc3! ♘xc3 15 bxa5 ♘e4 16 ♗f4 with the better endgame (Kasparov-Smyslov, Vilnius 9th matchgame 1984);

4) 9...0-0 10 e4 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♗a3 12 ♖b1 e5 13 ♗d3 with a minimal advantage, as in several tournament games in 1934-35. Half a century later I tried 10 ♗d3!? e5 (10...h6! 11 ♗h4 e5 is more accurate) 11 0-0 exd4 12 exd4 f6 13 ♗h4 ♖d8 14 a3! ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♘f8 16 ♗g3! followed by c3-c4 (Kasparov-Smyslov, Vilnius 3rd matchgame 1984).



9 ♗d3!?

This new, gambit move is objectively the most dangerous for Black, but in order to demonstrate this White has to play very accurately and energetically. It is incorrect to play 9 e4? ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♘a4! (Johner-Becker, Carlsbad 1929).

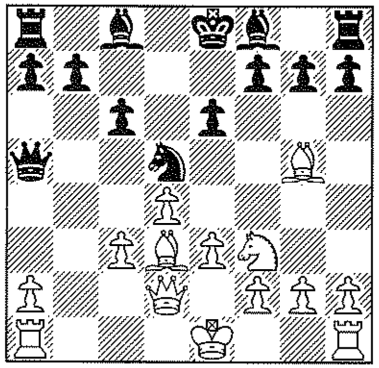
In the 1934 Leningrad tournament Levenfish played 9 a3 (against Ilyin-Genevsky) and 9 ♖c1 (against Euwe), and both of these continuations were analysed in detail by Euwe in the tournament book. It was then that Ilya Rabinovich suggested the variation that occurred in this game as an improvement.

9...♘xc3

This is more critical than 9...♗b4 10 ♖c1 f6 11 ♗h4 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗a3 13 ♖b1 c5 14 ♕c2! ♗d7 15 0-0 ♗a4 16 ♕e2 0-0 17 c4 with the initiative for White (Vaganian-Smyslov, Montpellier Candidates 1985).

10 bxc3 ♘d5

Nowadays 10...♘a4 11 0-0 ♕xc3 12 ♕e2 is also played.



11 ♖c1

Falling into the aforementioned analysis by Becker. Many years later the following continuation was discovered: 11 0-0! ♕xc3 (now 11...♘xc3? is bad because of 12 ♖fc1 ♗b4 13 a3!) 12 ♕e2 with a lasting initiative for the pawn, for example: 12...♗d6 13 ♘d2! ♕a5 14 ♘c4 ♕c7 15 ♕h5 ♗e7 16 f4! ♘f6! 17 ♕h4 (Vaganian-Torre, Biel Interzonal 1985) or instead 12...♗e7 13 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 14 ♘e5! (Polugayevsky-Seirawan, Biel Interzonal 1985).

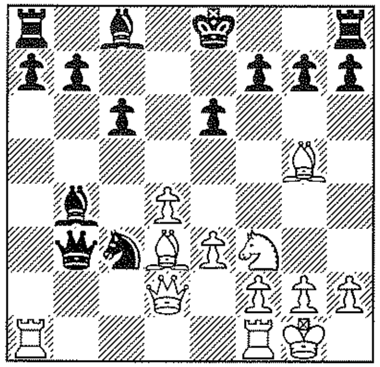
11...♘xc3 12 0-0

'Of course, not 12 ♖xc3? ♗b4. White has a big lead in development and the pawn sacrifice looks highly promising.' (Euwe)

12...♗b4 13 a3

'However, it turns out that the white queen has no good square to move to and for the sake of the attack a second pawn has to be sacrificed.' (Euwe)

13...♕xa3 14 ♖a1 ♕b3



15 ♗c2?

A decisive loss of a tempo: the black queen was dreaming of fleeing from b3 anyway. As was shown by later games, correct was 15 ♘e5 (suggested by Alekhine immediately after the game) or 15 ♖fc1 with compensation for the material. I will not delve into these sharp variations, since they can be found in many books.

15...♕d5 (it is not clear whether 15...♘e4 16 ♕d1 ♕d5 would have been better) **16 e4?!**

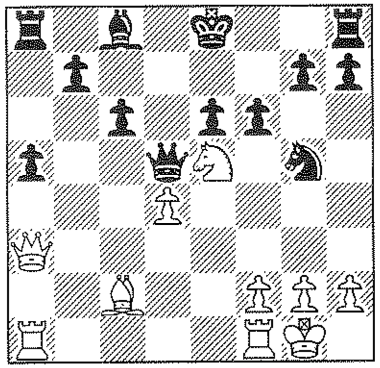
A desperate attempt to create an attack. It was hopeless to play 16 ♖fb1 c5! (but not 16...♘xb1? 17 ♕xb4) or 16 ♕d3 ♕b5! – here, strangely enough, on one occasion White managed to gain a draw: 17 e4 ♕xd3 18 ♗xd3 ♘b5 (18...f5!?) 19 ♖fb1 ♗e7?! 20 ♗xb5 cxb5 21 ♖xb5 etc. (Szabo-Unzicker, Buenos Aires 1960), but 19...♗c3! was stronger, retaining the extra pawns.

16...♘xe4 17 ♕xb4 ♘xg5 18 ♘e5

With the illusory dream of exploiting Black's backward development and keeping his king in the centre.

18...a5 19 ♕a3 f6!

'Of course, Black must not also open the d-file with 19...♕xd4.' (Euwe) The last few moves were made quickly and confidently by the challenger.



20 ♗g6+?

Total desperation! Only 20 ♗b3 ♕d8 21 ♘c4 ♘f7 22 ♖fe1 would have retained a certain intrigue, in the hope of 22...b6? 23 ♘xb6! ♕xb6 24 ♗xe6 with an attack, or 22...♕e7?! 23 ♘b6 ♕xa3 24 ♖xa3 ♖b8 25 ♖xa5 with drawing chances. But after 22...♖a6!, with the intention of ...♕e7, White has no compensation for his material deficit.

20...hxg6 21 ♘xg6 ♘f3+!

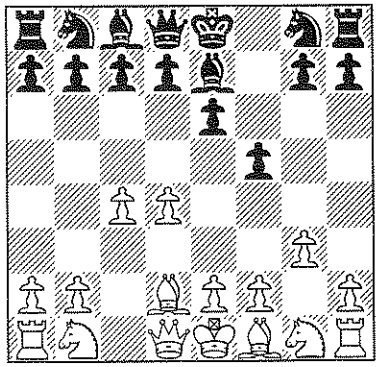
'A simple refutation of White's combination. Black not only saves the exchange, but also forces the exchange of queens.' (Euwe)

22 ♕xf3 (22 gxf3? ♕g5+) **22...♕xf3 23 gxf3 ♖h5 24 ♘f4 ♖f5 25 ♘d3 ♖xf3 26 ♘c5 b6 27 ♔g2 ♖f4**, and Black went on to win.

Holland rejoiced: for the first time in the match the challenger was leading: 13-12. This marked a clear turning-point. And the next game, the 26th, played in Zandvoort, predetermined the final outcome. Not without reason Tartakower called it 'the pearl of Zandvoort' – it was indeed the Dutchman's best creative achievement in the match. Whereas in the 25th game Alekhine simply played badly, the 26th was a grand, heavyweight struggle, and Euwe was able to show himself in all his glory.

Game 18
M.Euwe-A.Alekhine
World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 26th game
Dutch Defence A90

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5!? (apparently a tribute to the hospitable 'home team'?) **3 g3 ♗b4+ 4 ♗d2 ♗e7**



A typical manoeuvre. 'White's queen's bishop takes away the d2-square from his king's knight, and thus Black's chances of occupying the important e4-square are increased. In addition, some difficulties may arise for White because his d-pawn is not protected by the queen.' (Euwe)

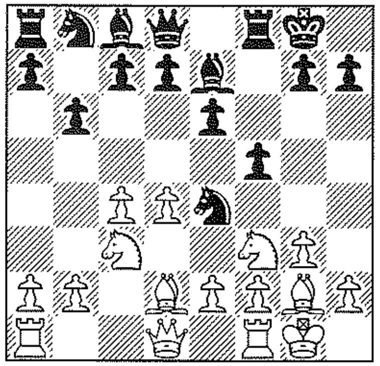
5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 ♘f3 (also possible is 7 ♘h3!? Kmoch-Yudovich, Leningrad 1934) **7...♘e4**

A rather strange interpretation of the Dutch. In my view it is better to erect the 'stonewall' by 7...d5: in that case the luring of the bishop to d2 looks more justified. However, in the 'stonewall' Black is always slightly worse...

8 0-0 b6?!

A dubious novelty. The 24th game went 8...♗f6 (8...d5; 8...d6) 9 ♘xe4 fxe4 10 ♘e1

♗xd4 11 ♗xe4 ♗xb2 12 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 13 ♕c2+ ♔g8 14 ♕xb2 ♘c6 with equality. A more solid path for White is 9 ♕c2!? ♘xd2 (9...d5 10 cxd5 exd5 10 ♗f4!) 10 ♕xd2 d6 11 e4 fxe4 12 ♘xe4 ♘c6 13 ♖ad1 ♗d7 14 b3 with a slight initiative (Grünfeld-Spielmann, Vienna 1935).



9 ♕c2

In my opinion, a delay. It is hard to understand why Black allowed, and White did not play 9 ♘xe4!? fxe4 10 ♘e5 – now 10...d6?! 11 ♗xe4 dxe5 12 ♗xa8 c6 does not work, and not only because of 13 d5 (both 13 ♗c3 and even the crude 13 dxe5 are also good), whereas 10...♗b7 11 ♕c2 d5 (11...d6 12 ♗xe4) 12 ♗h3 ♕d6 13 ♗f4 or 10...d5 11 cxd5 exd5 12 ♕b3 ♔h8 13 f3 exf3 14 ♖xf3 gives White a clear advantage.

In addition, 9 d5!?, by present-day norms a standard breakthrough, suggests itself. After all, this position is one of the *tabiyas* of the Queen's Indian Defence with an extra tempo for White! There after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♗b7 5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♘c3 ♘e4 8 ♗d2 f5 White plays either 9 d5 ♗f6! 10 ♖c1, or 9 ♕c2 ♗f6! (or 9...♘xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♗e4 11 ♕d2 ♗f6 12 ♘e1 etc.) 10 ♖ad1 with an insignificant plus, as in hundreds of games, from Karpov-Polugayevsky (Amsterdam 1981) to Ivanchuk-Timman (Wijk aan Zee 2001) etc.

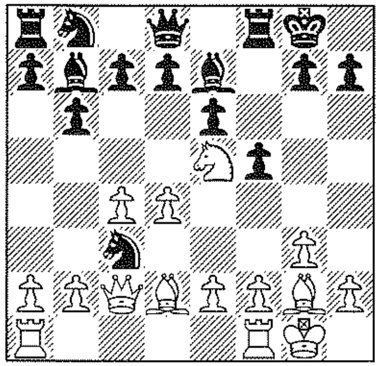
It is clear that the extra tempo increases White's advantage, since his opponent has still to complete his development. And although Black gained equal chances after 9 d5!? in the game Stahlberg-Alekhine (Dresden 1936) – 9...♗b7 10 ♘d4 ♗f6 11 ♗c1?! exd5 12 cxd5 ♘d6 13 ♘cb5 ♘xb5 14 ♘xb5 ♘a6 15 ♕c2 ♘c5, in the event of 11 ♘xe4! fxe4 12 ♗b4 it would not have been easy for him to achieve this.

9...♗b7 10 ♘e5

White exploits his extra tempo (the bishop at e7 has not yet moved to f6), which could also have been done by 10 d5!? or 10 ♖ad1!?

10...♘xc3

In avoiding a little trap – 10...d6? 11 ♘xe4!, Alekhine offers, in the words of Euwe, 'a well-known exchange sacrifice in this type of position, but one that White cannot really accept.'

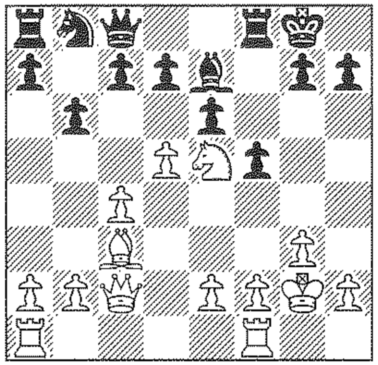


11 ♗xc3!

'11 ♗xb7 ♘xe2+ 12 ♔g2 ♘xd4 13 ♕d3 ♘bc6 14 ♘xc6, and now both 14...♘xc6 15 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 (16 ♕xd7? ♘e5+) and 14...dxc6 15 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 (16 ♕xd4? c5+) are good for Black.' (Euwe) In the second case after 16 f3 c5 17 ♗c3 Black has not more than good compensation for the exchange – the position is roughly equal. But Euwe's choice was correct, not wishing to lose his opening initiative.

11...♗xg2 12 ♔xg2 ♕c8 13 d5!

'Securing a slight positional advantage, as the scope of his bishop increases, while the scope of Black's bishop, on the other hand, decreases somewhat.' (Euwe)

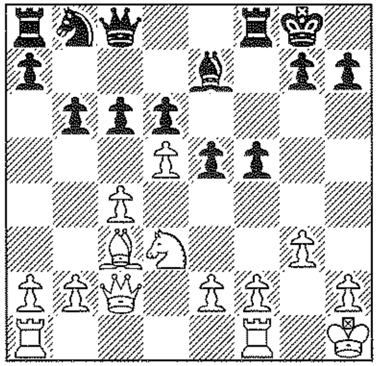


13...d6 (otherwise f2-f4 and e2-e4) **14 ♘d3 e5 15 ♔h1!?**

An amusing semi-waiting move, which does not affect the evaluation of the position. Euwe thought that the move f2-f4 would not run away: these were the first steps in the theory of Queen's Indian set-ups, and no one yet knew exactly which piece to place where. Of course, 15 f4 e4 16 ♘f2 ♘d7 17 g4 suggests itself, although even here after 17...♗f6! (weaker is 17...♘f6 18 e3!) 18 g5 ♗xc3 19 ♕xc3 ♕e8 White has nothing special. His advantage evaporates as Black completes his development.

15...c6

If 15...♘d7, then 16 ♘b4!, while after 15...c5 with 16 b4 White could have opened a front on the queenside, where there are breaches in Black's position.

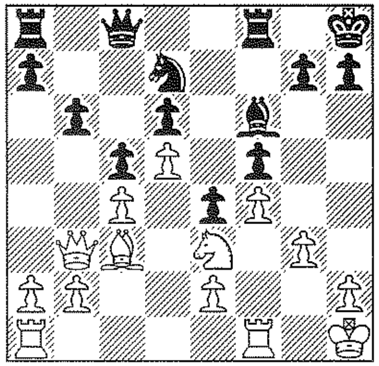


16 ♕b3! (with the threat of 17 c5! bxc5 18 ♘xe5 dxe5 19 d6+) **16...♔h8**

Maintaining the tension. 'Also possible was 16...c5. Then would follow 17 f4 e4 18 ♘e1 and the knight reaches the strong post at e3 via g2.' (Euwe) But this made sense: after 18...♘d7 19 ♘g2 ♗f6 the position is roughly equal. Although the knight will press on the f5-pawn from e3, Black should still be able to defend.

17 f4 e4 18 ♘b4! (with the intention of 19 dxc6 and 20 ♘d5) **18...c5 19 ♘c2 ♘d7 20 ♘e3 ♗f6**

Roughly the same position has been reached, as after 16...c5. The king move to h8 has hardly made any fundamental change. But it is important to note that Alekhine provokes the knight sacrifice on f5, hoping to go fishing in troubled waters and, if successful, to seize the initiative...



21 ♘xf5!

'A sound combination which gives White a decisive advantage. One can hardly call this move a sacrifice, as White obtains adequate material (three pawns) for the piece.' (Euwe)

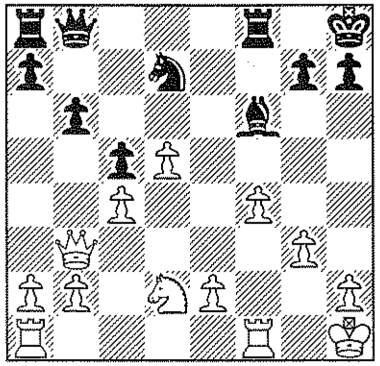
This move was rated very highly. I agree: one has to give credit to Euwe's courage! At this turning point of the match he played like Alekhine – he boldly launched his knight at the enemy fortifications, sharply disrupting the quiet course of the game. And although objectively there was little risk of White losing, for the time being there is also no 'decisive advantage'. Instead a very complicated and highly unclear position arises.

21...♗xc3 22 ♘xd6 ♕b8 23 ♘xe4 ♗f6

This has to be played, since if 23...♗d4?! there is the reply 24 ♘g5! (but not 24 e3? ♖e8 25 exd4 ♖xe4 and the chances are now with Black) 24...♕d6 25 e3 ♗f6 26 ♘e6 ♖fe8 27 e4 with an obvious advantage.

24 ♘d2!

'Threatening e2-e4-e5 etc. The consequences of White's 21st move are now clear: White has three powerful pawns by way of compensation; two of them are connected passed pawns in the centre, and sooner or later their advance will cost Black at least a piece.' (Euwe) Incidentally, subsequently a sacrifice with the aim of creating a pawn avalanche also occurred in the games of other world champions (cf. *Game No.133*).



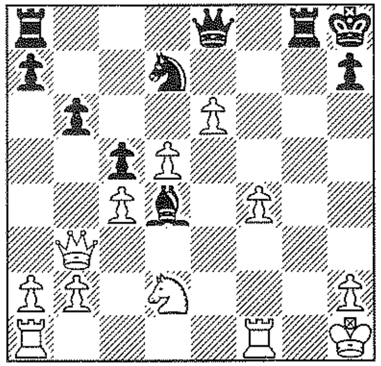
24...g5!

'Without a doubt the best counter-chance. Black must attempt to obtain a kingside attack, else the centre pawns will advance irresistibly. The drawback of the text move is, however, that White gets three passed pawns in the centre, and in addition the position of Black's king becomes exposed.' (Euwe)

Most probably Alekhine was happy with such a sharpening of the play, reckoning that Black also has his trumps, and hoping to outplay his opponent in the complications. Whereas after 24...a5?! 25 e4 ♗d4 26 ♘f3 a4 27 ♕c2 b5 28 ♘xd4 cxd4 29 c5 d3 30 ♕c3 b4 31 ♕c4 followed by c5-c6 and e4-e5 the white pawns would indeed have been irresistible.

25 e4 gxf4 26 gxf4 ♗d4 27 e5 ♕e8 28 e6 ♖g8!

A strong move, giving Black counterplay and chances of seizing the initiative. Instead 28...♘f6? 29 ♘f3 ♕g6 30 ♘xd4 cxd4 31 f5 ♕g4 32 ♕f3 ♕xf3+ 33 ♖xf3 ♖ac8 34 b3 b5 35 ♖d3 bxc4 36 ♖xd4 c3 37 d6 would have been advantageous to White.



29 ♘f3

Of course, not 29 exd7? ♕e2! 'Up to this point White has exploited his advantage correctly. But the text move is not the best and allows the win to slip out of his hands. The right move was 29 ♕h3! with the threefold tendency of: (1) protecting his own kingside; (2) menacing Black's king (with the threat of ♘f3-g5); (3) supporting the advance of the passed pawns. Against this line of play Black would be quite helpless, for example, 29...♘f6 30 ♘f3 ♗xb2 31 ♖ab1 etc.' (Euwe)

But it seems to me that here Euwe got rather carried away – no win for White is apparent: after 31...♗d4! 32 ♘xd4 (32 ♘g5 ♖g7 is also unclear – the bishop has remained alive!) 32...cxd4 the passed pawns are blockaded, and while White is eliminating the d4-pawn Black will activate his queen. For example: 33 ♕d3?! ♕g6! 34 ♕xg6 ♖xg6 35 ♖bd1 ♖ag8 36 ♖xd4 ♘g4 37 ♖d2 ♘e3 38 ♖e1 ♘xc4 and it is now White who has problems, or 33 ♖bd1 ♕g6! 34 ♖xd4 ♕c2 with counterplay on the g-file – 35 d6 ♘g4 36 ♕g2 ♕c3! 37 ♕d2 ♕h3 38 ♕g2 ♕c3 and a draw. This is that counterplay of which Black has been dreaming!

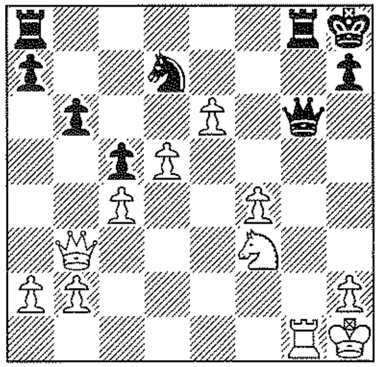
Thus the consequences of 29 ♕h3 were unclear, and I would not criticise 29 ♘f3, especially since it involves an amazingly beautiful idea.

29...♕g6 30 ♖g1!

A very strong move: White now sacrifices a whole rook (against Alekhine, incidentally, players very rarely sacrificed a rook – he liked to do this himself!). '30 ♘g5 would be answered by 30...♘e5 with promising counterplay for Black.' (Euwe)

30...♗xg1 31 ♖xg1

The culmination of the battle.

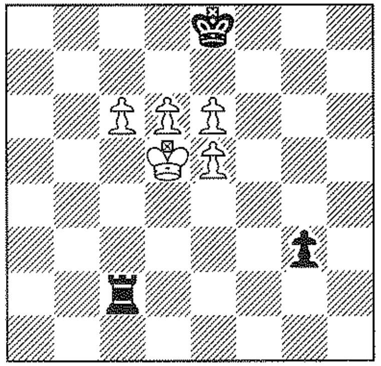


31...♕f6?

'This loses. Correct was 31...♕f5!, after which 32 ♘g5 would not have been good, because of 32...h6! (*apart from 32...♖xg5 33 fxg5 ♕e4+ 34 ♖g2 ♕e1+ or 34...♖f8 35 ♕d1 ♕xc4 36 ♖e2 ♕f4 37 exd7 ♕f3+ with a draw – G.K.*). Hence White would have been compelled to continue 32 exd7 ♖xg1+ 33 ♔xg1 ♕xd7 34 ♔f2 with about equal chances.' (Euwe)

But here, in my opinion, without risking anything White can fight for an advantage: 34...♖f8 35 ♕c3+ ♕g7 36 ♕e5! with the conditional variation 36...♔g8 37 ♔e3 ♕g6 38 ♘g5 (the knight has some strong points!) 38...♖e8 39 ♘e6 ♕g1+ 40 ♔d3 ♕f1+ 41 ♔d2 ♕g2+ 42 ♔c3 ♕h3+ 43 ♔c2 ♕xh2+ 44 ♔b3 ♕g3+ 45 ♔a4 etc. Only with 33...♕xf4! (instead of 33...♕xd7) 34 ♕c3+ ♔g8 35 ♘e5 ♖d8 36 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 37 ♔h3 ♕f5+ 38 ♔g2 ♕e4+ does Black indeed gain a draw.

As regards 32 ♘g5 h6! (an attempt by Black to play for a win), with the help of a computer I discovered the following variation which, though not forced, is highly amusing: 33 ♕c3+ ♘f6 34 ♕e5 ♕xe5 35 fxe5 ♘g4 36 ♖xg4 ♖xg5 37 ♖xg5 hxg5 38 d6 ♔g7 39 ♔g2 ♔f8 (but not 39...♖h8? 40 d7 winning) 40 ♔f3 ♖b8! (40...♖e8? 41 e7+ ♔f7 42 d7 wins for White) 41 a4 a6 42 ♔e4 b5 43 axb5 (43 cxb5? axb5 44 a5 ♖a8 45 ♔d5 ♖xa5) 43...axb5 44 b3 ♔e8 45 ♔d5 bxc4 46 bxc4 ♖b2 47 ♔xc5 g4 48 ♔d5 ♖xh2 49 c5 ♖d2+ 50 ♔e4 ♖c2 51 ♔d5 g3 (not satisfying himself with 51...♖d2+) 52 c6



Analysis diagram

52...♖c5+ 53 ♔xc5 g2 54 d7+ ♔e7 55 c7 g1♕+ 56 ♔c6 ♕g2+ with perpetual check!

Thus 31...♕f5! would most probably have maintained the balance, whereas now the knight thrust becomes highly unpleasant for Black.

32 ♘g5! (it would appear that Alekhine underestimated this move, reckoning only on 32 exd7) **32...♖g7**

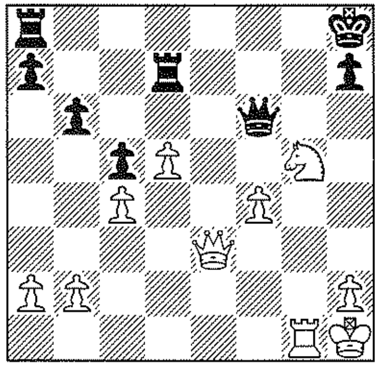
'Black has nothing better. 32...h6 (nor is 32...♖xg5 satisfactory because of 33 fxg5 ♕d4 34 ♕c3! and White's passed pawns will win for him) would now be refuted by 33 ♘f7+ ♔h7 34 ♕d3+ ♖g6 35 ♘e5! (*to the 'computer-*

like' 35 exd7 ♕xf7 36 ♕e4 with the threat of 37 ♖xg6, ♕e7+ and d8♕ there is the brilliant reply 36...h5!! 37 d8♕ ♖xd8 38 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 39 ♕e7+ ♔h6 40 ♕xd8 ♕e4+ with perpetual check – G.K.) 35...♘xe5 (35...♘f8 36 e7!) 36 fxe5 ♕g7 37 d6 and Black cannot parry the threat of 38 ♕xg6+ ♕xg6 39 ♖xg6 ♔xg6 40 d7 followed by 41 e7.' (Euwe)

But the paradox is that 37 d6? loses to 37...♕b7+ 38 ♕d5 ♖xg1+! (but not 38...♕xd5+? 39 cxd5 ♖xg1+ 40 ♔xg1 ♔g6 41 d7 ♖g8 42 ♔h1 ♔f5 43 e7 and not 38...♕g7? 39 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 40 ♕b7+) 39 ♔xg1 ♕g7+ 40 ♕g2 ♖g8 41 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7! (this way, rather than 41...♖xg7+?? 42 ♔h1 ♔g6 43 d7 winning) 42 ♔f2 ♔f8 43 ♔f3 ♖g5 and White is lost: his pawns are not going anywhere, whereas the black h-pawn triumphantly advances to the queening square.

Did Black really miss his best chance? No, Euwe's intuition did not let him down: instead of 37 d6? White should first make the very fine move 37 h4! and only after 37...h5 (the only reply) – 38 d6 ♕b7+ 39 ♔h2 and the curtain falls.

33 exd7 ♖xd7 34 ♕e3



34...♖e7

'Not 34...♕xb2 35 ♕e6 etc.' (Euwe) However, after 35...♕g7 there does not seem to be any direct win: in the event of 36 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 37 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 38 ♕e5+ ♔g8 39 d6 or 36 ♘xh7 ♕e7 37 ♘f8 ♕xe6 38 ♘xe6 White has a large advantage, but this is not yet 'winning for White' and there is still some play. In my opinion, it is stronger to play 35 ♕e5+!? ♕xe5 36 fxe5 ♖g7 37 e6 and the pawns promote, for example: 37...h6 38 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 39 exf7 ♖f8 40 ♖g8+! (the pawn endgame is won thanks to the passed d-pawn) 40...♖xg8 41 fxg8♕+ ♔xg8 42 ♔g2 ♔f7 43 ♔f3 ♔e7 44 ♔e4 ♔d6 45 a4 a6 46 h3! h5 47 h4 wins for White.

Once again Euwe perhaps did not see through all the variations to the end, but in general his evaluation of the position was correct.

35 ♘e6 ♖f8

'Again 35...♕xb2 was impossible: 36 d6! ♖d7 (36...♖ee8 37 d7 ♖e7 38 d8♕+ ♖xd8 39 ♘xd8!) 37 ♘c7 ♖f8 38 ♕e5+ etc.' (Euwe)

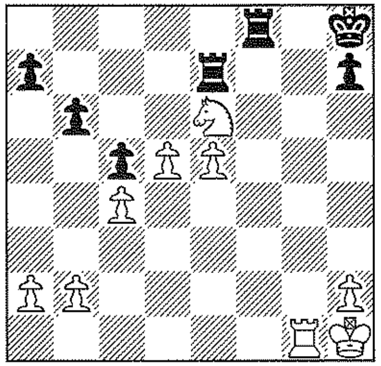
But after 37...♖c8! 38 ♕e5+ ♕xe5 39 fxe5 ♖cxc7 40 dxc7 ♖xc7 the position is a draw. Therefore instead of 37 ♘c7?! I would prefer 37 ♘g5! with the same threat of ♕e5+, for example: 37...♕f6 (37...♖xd6?? 38 ♘f7 mate) 38 ♕e5! ♖f8 39 ♘e4, forcing 39...♕xe5 40 fxe5 and wins, or 37...♖g7 38 ♕e5! ♕xe5 39 fxe5 h6 40 ♘e4 ♖xg1+ 41 ♔xg1 ♔g7 42 e6 winning.

36 ♕e5!

'Leads to a won ending for White, but there are still some pretty points.' (Euwe)

36...♕xe5 37 fxe5

The subsequent events took place in a sharp time scramble.



37...♖f5?!

'Better was 37...♖xe6! 38 dxe6 ♖f5! (not 38...♖e8 39 ♔g2 ♖xe6 40 ♖e1 ♔g7 41 ♔f3) 39 ♖e1 ♔g8 and the rook and pawn ending is still quite difficult. After 40 ♔g2 ♔f8 White cannot play 41 ♖f1, as Black would win both pawns after the exchange of rooks. The best continuation is 40 ♖e3! ♔f8 41 ♖a3 ♖xe5 (if 41...a5 42 ♖b3) 42 ♖xa7 ♖xe6 43 b3! ♖e2 44 ♖xh7 ♖xa2 45 ♖b7 etc.' (Euwe)

However, 43...♖e2? simply blunders a pawn. 43...h5! is much stronger, for example: 44 ♔g2?! ♖e2+ 45 ♔g3 h4+ 46 ♔h3 ♔e8 47 a4 ♖e3+ 48 ♔xh4 ♖xb3 49 a5 ♖b4 50 axb6 ♖xb6 51 ♖c7 ♖h6+ 52 ♔g3 ♖g6+ 53 ♔f4 ♖h6 54 ♔e5 ♖xh2 55 ♔d6 ♔d8 with a draw. White can probably still win, by continuing, say, 44 ♖b7 ♔e8 (44...♖e2 45 a4) 45 a4 ♔d8 46 ♔g2 ♔c8 47 ♖h7 ♖c3 48 a5! ♖xb3 49 axb6 ♖xb6 50 ♖xh5 ♖c6 51 ♖d5. But great accuracy would indeed be required of him!

Objectively 37...♖f5?! is nevertheless a mistake, but Alekhine, it seems to me, did not want to go into a difficult rook ending: he was relying on his extra exchange and was hoping to create some counter-threats.

38 ♖e1

'The right way was 38 ♖g5! ♖xg5 39 ♘xg5 ♔g7 (39...h6 40 d6!; *39...♖g7 40 d6 ♔g8 41 e6 – G.K.*) 40 d6! and White wins – for example, 40...♖xe5 41 d7 ♖e1+ 42 ♔g2 ♖d1 43 d8♕ ♖xd8 44 ♘e6+. Or 40...♖d7 41 ♘e6+ ♔f7 42 ♘f4 ♔e8 43 ♔g2 ♖g7+ 44 ♔f3 ♔d7 45 ♔e4 ♔c6 46 ♘d5 etc.' (Euwe) However, after 45...♖g1! there is no clear win! In my opinion, it is simpler to play 40 e6! ♔f8 41 d6 ♖g7 42 h4 h6 43 d7 ♔e7 44 ♘f7 ♖g8 45 h5 and Black, being in zugzwang, is unable to prevent ♔h2-h3 and d8♕ winning.

On the other hand, instead of 38...♖xg5? it is better to play 38...♖f2! After 39 ♘d8 ♖e8 40 ♘c6 ♖xb2 41 e6 (41 d6 ♖d2!) 41...♖d2 42 ♖g2 ♖d1+ 43 ♖g1 ♖d2 44 a4 (44 ♘e5!?) Black's position would appear to be lost, but there is still some play.

38...h6?!

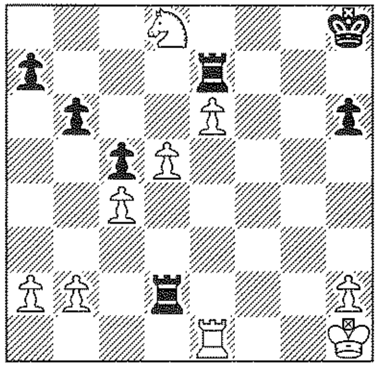
'Missing another chance to return the exchange: 38...♖xe6! 39 dxe6 ♔g8 40 ♖e3!, by analogy with the line given above. If 38...♔g8, then 39 ♖g1+ ♔f7 40 ♘d8+ ♔f8 41 ♘c6 or 39...♔h8 40 ♖g5!, as in the preceding note.

39 ♘d8

'Now the white pawns have a clear path (the e5-pawn is protected indirectly) and the win is only a question of a few more moves.' (Euwe)

39...♖f2 40 e6 ♖d2

Here the game was adjourned. The resumption did not last long: White elegantly demonstrated the power of his passed pawns, supported by rook and knight.



41 ♘c6 (the sealed move) **41...♖e8 42 e7 b5**

Or 42...♔g7 43 ♖e6 ♖xb2 44 d6 ♖d2 45 ♘e5.

43 ♘d8 ♔g7 44 ♘b7 ♔f6 45 ♖e6+ ♔g5 46 ♘d6 ♖xe7 47 ♘e4+ 1-0

In this game the hard-working white knight made 19 moves!

A wonderful game, even though many nuances, not noticed by previous commentators, have been discovered. Euwe played very boldly, creatively and inventively. Through habit Alekhine provoked his opponent, drawing the enemy fire... as in the 1934 match with Bogoljubow. But with Euwe it didn't work out!

The score became 14-12 in the challenger's favour. He only needed another 1½ points, but the champion – and this was why he was the champion! – did not give up. Here is an extract from a report on the 27th game: 'Euwe is the first to appear on the stage and survey the audience with a cheerful smile. After him comes Alekhine, also with a similar smile. But everyone knows that behind this smile is concealed a cruel fanatical strength, which is seeking satisfaction. The many hundred spectators (even the staircases and window-sills are crowded) observe how Alekhine sits down at the board with one of his cats on his shoulder. "Black magic?" At any event, Alekhine wins this game, leaving the outcome of the match open to the very end and reducing the Dutch to nervous exhaustion.'

In the 28th game the champion employed a manoeuvre found by his new second Klein with Black in the Orthodox Defence, gained the advantage and adjourned the game with an extra pawn and real winning chances. But Euwe, with the help of Maróczy, a great expert on the endgame, found a way to save the draw... 14½-13½!

The champion's last 'White' game, the 29th, became practically his last chance. The hall was packed, and hundreds of fans gathered in crowds on the street... Alekhine played 1 e4, and Euwe answered with a surprise – 1...♘f6!? Alekhine later recalled that moment: 'My opening... New York, Capablanca, Bogoljubow, San Remo, Zürich – my entire career again passed before me. And here, at end of the path, again my opening. In the 29th game I have to fight against my own opening and close the circle with my own hands.' He was able to obtain a double-rook ending with an extra pawn and chances of success. But, as he himself said, technique is nerves: one abrupt move, and a draw became inevitable... 15-14!

For the concluding, 30th game (Amsterdam, 15th December) Alekhine appeared in evening-dress. When the two players were taking their seats, Euwe said quietly: 'At any moment I am agreeable to a draw.' In reply the Russian champion played the Queen's Gambit Accepted riskily and by the 29th move he had a lost endgame two pawns down. Here Euwe offered a draw, but Alekhine declined, explaining: 'I need to win.' But after White's 40th move he asked: 'Shall we adjourn the game or can I congratulate you now?' This was an agreement to a draw. Thus Euwe won the match 15½-14½ and became the fifth world champion in the history of chess.

The two players stood up and firmly shook hands. There were tears in Alekhine's eyes, but, to the delight of the excited spectators, he found in himself the strength to declare loudly: 'Hurrah for the new world champion! Long live Dutch chess!' In reply the crowd, after honouring Euwe, unexpectedly began singing 'La Marseillaise', which was also taken up by Alekhine...

I will give only the most noteworthy, in my view, of the numerous reactions to this sensational victory – which are, in the nature of literary chess, monuments to the age.

Lasker: 'Euwe has the great responsibility of being a worthy successor to Anderssen, Morphy, Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine. They all enriched the history of chess, and we hope that the new champion will be able to make his own contribution to it and to raise the science of our ancient game to a higher level. As a teacher, he is pressed for time, but the chess world expects this from him, exclaiming: bravo, Euwe!'

Spielmann: 'First of all I should like to express my joy and amazement regarding the fact that the chess throne has been occupied not only by an outstanding master, but also a very likeable person. I do not intend to discuss whether the new champion is stronger than his predecessors, the Lasker-Capablanca-Alekhine trio. But one thing is certain: the supreme chess title has been won by a truly noble person, a gentleman from head to toe.'

Tartakower: 'In the kingdom of the goddess Caissa a new champion is asserting his rights. You know his name – Dr Euwe, but you are mistaken, since his real name is Chess Logic. So, after the chess philosopher Steinitz, the man of energy Lasker, the chess virtuoso Capablanca and the chess romantic Alekhine, we have finally acquired one who has returned chess to its origin – the source of divine logic!

A Worthy Champion

Even so, it is interesting to consider: how accidental or logical, from the historical viewpoint, was the Dutchman's seemingly almost incredible win?

As I have already mentioned, a crisis in Alekhine's play was apparent in the 1934 match with Bogoljubow. It stands to reason that Euwe and his helpers had thoroughly studied that match and had noticed the champion's opening problems and his often fanciful or simply nervy, impatient play. This was the first experience of team work – the same thing, only alone, that Alekhine had done earlier when preparing for his match with Capablanca. The challenger realised that even on the sun there were spots! The Dutchman's trumps were his innate rationalism, methodicalness, splendid competitive qualities and excellent self-preparation.

Alekhine undoubtedly played worse than in the early 1930s, violating the competitive regime and experiencing problems with his health. But the main reason for his defeat against Euwe was his underestimation of the opponent. Having no doubts about his success, he wrote before the match: 'I do not believe in Euwe as a future world champion and I do not think that even after an accidental win against me he would be acknowledged as essentially the best player in the world. If our contest should conclude in a win for him, this will only show that at the given moment I was not at the top of my game. So much the worse for me. But Euwe, if he becomes the formal world champion, will face a very difficult task, similar to that which I had to solve after winning the match against Capablanca: show that at the given moment in time, he, Euwe, is indeed the best. While by no means wishing him to win the match, I hope that he will in essence show himself to be a true world champion.'

In other words, in 1935 the 'Capablanca syndrome' operated! After his triumph in New York 1927 and his striking win in the seventh game of the match with Alekhine, the Cuban believed implicitly in his success. As did Alekhine in the match with Euwe: playing attractively and energetically (one only has to think of the brilliant fourth game, the forerunner of Tal-like chess – *Volume 1, Game No.141*), he was leading 3-1, then 6-3, and he decided that everything was going fine and that the hard work had been done.

It was clear: when Alekhine was in the ascendancy, Euwe could not cope with him. But it only needed the Dutchman to display amazing self-control and to survive these heavy defeats, without losing his methodicalness, enterprise and eagerness for a fight – and Alekhine grew nervous and became rattled (exactly like Capablanca in 1927). His opening repertoire with Black showed serious flaws, he had neither the desire, nor the strength to engage time after time in a gruelling defence, his risks ceased to justify themselves, the mistakes became more frequent – and the challenger snatched victory in the match!

In my view, it was a fully merited victory. For comparison, recall the Karpov-Short Candidates match (1992). 'Before the start Karpov was also considered the favourite, but Short won on merit. He was then in the ascendancy, he was significantly more motivated and he very much wanted this, just as Euwe did in 1935. At that moment Euwe simply played more strongly,' states Jan Timman, and it is hard to disagree with him.

'Whatever was said about Alekhine's poor form in 1935, it is hard to say who else could have got the better of him then,' writes the master S.Grabusov. 'Only a player with comparable opening preparation and not inferior in tactical complexities was capable of defeating him. All this was demonstrated in full measure by Euwe, added to which there was his amazing trainability, which made him stronger literally game by game.' That was it: trainability! Euwe's approach gave notice of new, scientific and competitive tendencies in the development of the game, and became a prelude to the Botvinnik era.

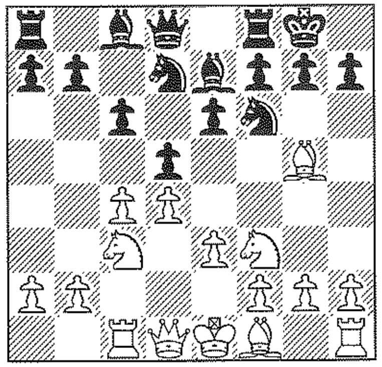
The match brought the Dutch grandmaster glory and the title, but no monetary reward at all: the organisers were able only to collect the prize fund for his opponent demanded by the 1922 London agreement (10,000 guilders, i.e. roughly US $6,700). Therefore, after signing an agreement to a return match with Alekhine and accepting invitations to three international tournaments, immediately after the Christmas holiday Dr Euwe turned to his main, teaching work...

In the summer he again sat down at the board and could have enjoyed the greatest tournament successes in his career, had it not been for one 'but': a very strong young generation had appeared in the chess arena and a change of eras was starting to get underway. This was shown in Bad Nauheim, May 1936 (1-2. Alekhine and Keres), and then also Zandvoort, July 1936: 1. Fine – 8½ out of 11; 2. Euwe – 7½; 3-4. Keres and Tartakower – 6½; 5-6. Bogoljubow and Maróczy – 6; 7-9. Grünfeld, Landau and Spielmann – 5½ etc.

In the fifth round Euwe met Fine in a duel between the leaders and gained a decisive advantage, but then missed a win in time-trouble. And in the sixth he lost to Bogoljubow with a blunder, which decided the fate of first place... On the other hand, the world champion conducted his final game against the 'old wolf' Maróczy in expansive and aggressive style.

Game 19
M.Euwe-G.Maróczy
Zandvoort 1936, 10th round
Queen's Gambit Declined D63

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 ♖c1 (7 ♕c2) **7...c6**



8 a3 (White more often fights for a tempo with 8 ♕c2 – *Volume 1, Game Nos.120 and 121*) **8...h6**

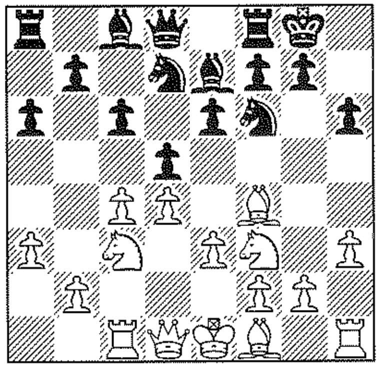
'Better is 8...♘e4 or 8...♖e8.' (Euwe) But the move in the game is also not so bad.

9 ♗f4 (9 ♗h4 ♘e4! equalises) **9...a6**

Here 9...♖e8 10 ♗d3 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 a6 12 e4 b5 13 ♗a2 ♗b7 14 e5 favours White (Botvinnik-Kan, Leningrad 1934).

10 h3

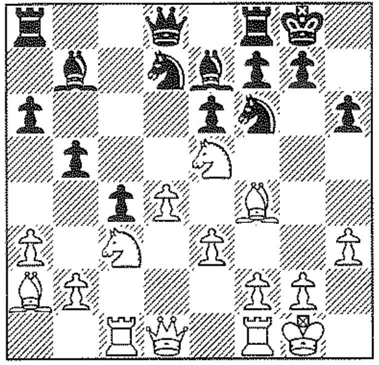
'The struggle for the tempo continues, and incidentally the queen's bishop is provided with a retreat' (Euwe).



10...dxc4 (10...♖e8 11 ♕c2!?) **11 ♗xc4 b5 12 ♗a2** (the justification of White's eighth move) **12...♗b7**

'12...c5 would be less good because of the reply 13 d5.' (Euwe) Nothing of the sort: after 13...exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♖a7 16 0-0 ♘f6 the chances are equal. And 13 0-0 ♗b7 leads to a position from the game. Therefore 12...c5 is no worse than 12...♗b7.

13 0-0 (but not 13 b4?! a5! with excellent counterplay) **13...c5 14 ♘e5 c4**



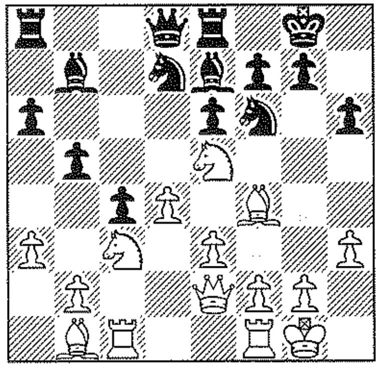
'This gives the game a particularly sharp character. Black now has the queenside majority of pawns which in the event of an ending might very likely decide the game in his favour. White therefore turns all his efforts to the preparation of a kingside attack.' (Euwe)

Also possible is 14...cxd4!? 15 exd4 ♘b6 and ...♘bd5 with the usual play against an isolated d4-pawn.

15 ♗b1 ♖e8?!

In my view, a loss of time. Better was the immediate 15...♘xe5 16 ♗xe5 (no use is 16 dxe5?! ♕xd1 17 ♖fxd1 ♘d5) 16...♘d7 17 ♕c2 f5 18 ♗f4 ♘f6 with chances for both sides.

16 ♕e2



16...♘xe5

'This is probably a decisive mistake, since White's attack becomes more powerful than ever. On the other hand, the text weakens White's pawns so that his game will be decidedly inferior if the attack does not succeed.' (Euwe)

However, the move in the game is hardly worse than 16...♘b6: here after 17 ♗g3 followed by ♖fd1 and e3-e4 or f2-f4 White has good attacking chances.

17 dxe5 ♘h7

'Forced; not 17...♘d5 because of 18 ♕c2 winning a pawn (*I have not found any real compensation for it: 18...g6 19 ♗xh6 ♔h7 20 ♗f4 ♘xf4 21 exf4 ♕d4 22 g3 ♗f3 23 ♖ce1 ♔g7 24 ♖e3 ♗c6 25 ♖d1 ♕b6 26 ♘e4 – G.K.*). 17...♘d7 would likewise be inferior: 18 ♕g4 ♔h8 19 ♕h5 with the double threat of ♕xf7 or ♗xh6.' (Euwe) For example, 19...♔g8 20 ♗xh6 gxh6 21 ♕xh6 ♘f8 22 ♖cd1 ♗g5 23 ♕h5 ♕e7 24 f4 winning.

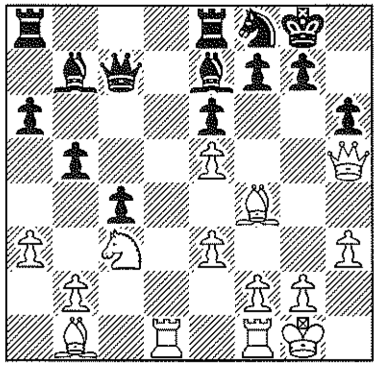
But after 18...♕c7! (instead of 18...♔h8?) 19 ♗xh6 ♕xe5 20 ♗f4 ♕f6 the position is unclear. On the other hand, instead of 18 ♕g4 better is 18 ♕h5!, for example: 18...♘c5 19 ♖fd1 ♘d3! (if 19...♕c7 White wins prettily by 20 ♗xh6! gxh6 21 ♕xh6 ♘d3 22 ♖xd3! cxd3 23 ♗xd3 f5 24 exf6 ♗xf6 25 ♕xf6 ♕g7 26 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 27 ♘xb5) 20 ♗xd3 cxd3 (it is clear that this pawn is doomed) 21 e4 ♕d7 22 ♕g4 ♔h7 23 ♘d5!? ♗xd5 24 ♖xd3 with some advantage. Not enough? But after all, White in fact had hardly anything...

18 ♕h5

With the threat of ♗xh7+ and ♕xf7. 'A worthwhile alternative was 18 ♕g4, in order to answer 18...♗g5 with 19 ♖cd1 followed by ♗g3 with a view to f2-f4 (*and if 19...♕e7 20 ♗g3 f5, then 21 exf6 ♘xf6 22 ♕e2 – G.K.*).' (Euwe) Indeed, here 18 ♕g4! was stronger, since after 18...♕c7! 19 ♗xh6 (19 ♗g3 ♖ad8) 19...♕xe5 20 ♗f4 ♕f6 21 e4 White nevertheless retains a slight initiative: the knight is less well placed at h7 than at d7.

18...♘f8! (an excellent defensive post for the knight) **19 ♖cd1 ♕c7!**

After 19...♕b6?! 20 ♗xh6 gxh6 21 ♖d4 f5 22 exf6 ♗xf6 23 ♖g4+ ♗g7 24 ♕xh6 ♖e7 Black would have obtained the same position, but a tempo down.



20 ♗xh6?!

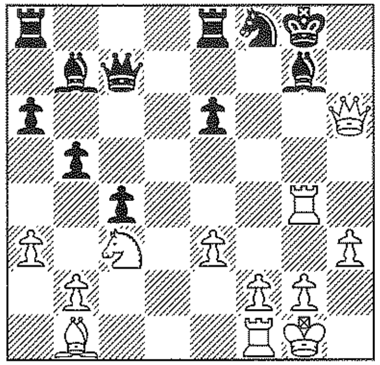
With quiet play White has not even a hint of an advantage: 20 ♘e4 ♗xe4 21 ♗xe4 ♖ad8 is level. And the champion decided to sharpen the play in the hope of confusing the chess veteran – it would appear that he was not averse to creating another 'pearl of Zandvoort'.

Euwe considered this purely positional piece sacrifice to be completely correct: 'Now White just manages to take one of his rooks to the front.' But the computer is of a different 'opinion': the move in the game deserves a question mark! Although it is hard to bring oneself to attach one...

20...gxh6 (weaker is 20...g6?! 21 ♕g4 ♕xe5 22 e4! etc.) **21 ♖d4 f5!**

The only move. Euwe writes: 'On 21...♗g5, 22 h4 ♕xe5 23 hxg5 hxg5 24 ♖g4 would be very strong.' However, after 24...f6 25 ♖g3 ♕c7 26 ♖h3 ♕g7 no win is apparent. In my opinion, it is stronger to play 22 ♖g4! ♕xe5 23 ♕xh6 f6, and here not 24 f4 ♕xe3+ 25 ♔h2 (25 ♔h1 ♖e7) 25...♕d4 26 fxg5 ♕e5+ 27 ♖g3 f5 with an unclear game, but the far from obvious 'machine variation' 24 ♘d1! ♔f7 25 ♕h8 ♕c7 26 f4 winning.

22 exf6 ♗xf6 23 ♖g4+ ♗g7 24 ♕xh6



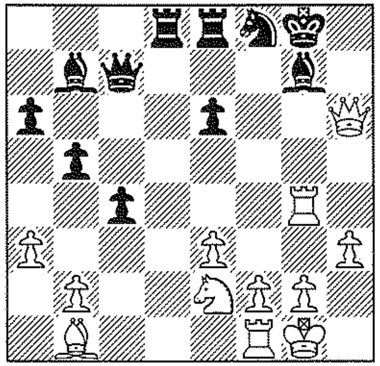
'This is the position White was aiming for with his sacrifice. Note especially the helplessness of the black pieces, underlined by the inaccessibility of the important f6-square.' (Euwe) And indeed, White appears to have excellent compensation for the missing material... But this proves to be an illusion!

24...♖ad8!

After 24...♕e5 25 ♖g5 ♖ad8 26 ♕h5 ♕f6 27 f4 White would have had more chances than in the game (for example, 27...♖d2 28 ♗e4!).

25 ♘e2?!

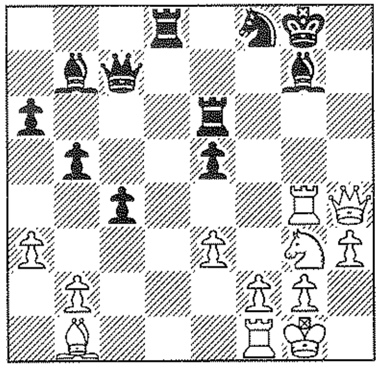
In my view, a dubious move: the manoeuvre of the knight to h5 does not achieve anything. Perhaps 25 ♗e4!? should have been played.



25...e5

Euwe does not comment on this move. But why weaken the light squares? After the simple, competent move 25...♖e7!? Black would have had every chance of repelling the attack and retaining a material advantage: 26 ♘f4 ♕e5 27 ♘h5 ♖f7 28 f4 ♕xb2 29 e4 ♖d2! 30 ♔h1 ♖xg2 and wins. When it is a machine playing Black, White's attack quickly comes to a standstill, and he is a piece down!

26 ♘g3 ♖e6 (but not 26...♖d6? 27 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 28 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 29 ♘f5+) **27 ♕h4**



27...♖d3?

A nervy, impulsive move. 'The point of the text move is to eliminate the dangerous bishop at b1.' (Euwe) But at what a price! Black would also have lost after 27...♕e7? 28 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 29 ♘f5+ or 28...♕xg7 29 ♕xd8. Euwe also gives the variation 27...♖dd6?! 28 ♘f5 ♘g6 29 ♕g3 ♖b6 30 h4, 'and Black has no defence against h4-h5', but more tenacious is 29...e4! 30 f4! exf3 31 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 32 ♗xg6 fxg2 33 ♖b1 ♕xg3 34 ♖xg3 ♔f8 35 ♗f5 ♖e7 36 e4 etc.

Finally, Euwe considers 27...e4! 28 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 29 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 30 ♖xe4 ♗xb2 31 f4 ♖d7 (31...c3? 32 ♕g5+ ♔f7 33 f5 c2 34 f6 wins for White) 32 ♖f3 ♖h7?! 33 ♖g3+ ♗g7? 34 ♖e7! ♕b6 35 ♕g5 ♘e6 36 ♕g6 and wins.

However, after the 'silicon' 32...♕d6! (32...♗g7 and ...c4-c3) 33 f5 ♖h7 34 ♖g4+ ♔f7 35 ♕g5 ♗f6 36 ♕g8+ ♔e8 the attack is parried and the advantage is with Black. But more important, instead of the panicky 29...♖xe4 stronger is 29...♕e7!, forcing the exchange of queens: after 30 ♗f5 ♕xh4 31 ♗xe6+ ♘xe6 32 ♖xh4 ♗xb2 the c-pawn quickly promotes.

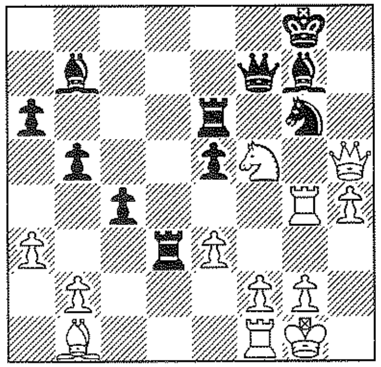
Since after 27...e4! both 28 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 29 ♘xe4 ♕e7 30 ♘g5 ♖g6 and 28 ♘f5 ♖d7 29 ♘h6+ (29 ♕h5 ♕b6) 29...♖xh6 30 ♕xh6 ♕e5 are unfavourable for White, it can be concluded that Euwe was on the verge of losing and only the move 27...♖d3? turned the evaluation of the position through 180 degrees.

28 ♘f5 ♘g6 29 ♕h5!

This way, rather than 29 ♖xg6? ♖xg6 30 ♘e7+ ♕xe7! 31 ♕xe7 ♖xg2+ 32 ♔h1 ♖xf2+ 33 ♔g1 (not 33 ♕xb7? ♖xf1+ and 34...♖xb1 and Black wins) 33...♖g2+ with perpetual check.

29...♕f7 30 h4!

With the decisive threat of ♕g5 and h4-h5.



30...♗f8?!

Maróczy, like Euwe in his commentary, misses the more tenacious 30...♖d2! 31 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 32 ♕xh6 e4 with saving chances: 33 h5 ♕g7 34 ♕g5 ♖d5 35 ♕xg6 ♖xg6 36 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 37 hxg6 ♖d2 (an amusing endgame!) 38 f4 exf3 39 gxf3 ♖xb2 40 ♗f5 ♔g7 41 ♖f2 ♖xf2 42 ♔xf2 a5 43 ♔e2 with a probable draw, but not 43 e4? b4 44 a4 (44 axb4? a4! 45 ♗e6 ♗a6 or 45 e5 a3 46 ♗b1 c3 47 ♔e3 c2 wins for Black) 44...c3 45 ♔e2 ♗c6 with advantage to Black.

The only decisive move is the sudden, colossally strong 33 f4!! Now Black cannot capture en passant, while after 33...♕g7 34

♕h5 ♖f6 35 f5! ♕h7 36 ♕g5 ♕g7 37 h5 the two white pawns literally break the enemy defences.

31 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 32 ♕xh6 ♕h7 33 ♕g5 ♔f7 34 ♗xd3 cxd3 35 ♕f5+ 1-0

Black resigned in view of 35...♔e7 36 h5 ♘f8 37 ♕xh7+ ♘xh7 38 ♖g7+ or 35...♖f6 36 ♕d7+ ♔g8 37 ♕e8+ ♔g7 38 ♕e7+ ♖f7 39 ♕xe5+ ♔f8 40 ♕d6+ ♔g7 41 ♕xd3.

This game reveals Euwe's tactical talent. The bishop sacrifice was rather reckless – it might be said, Tal-like! However, to refute it at the board, with the clock ticking, was not at all easy, and the experienced positional player Maróczy was unable to cope with this task.

A week and a half later the major tournament of the mid-1930s began, the incredibly intriguing Nottingham 1936, which assembled five world champions of different eras. And the new king started in truly champion-like style – 4 out of 4(!), then he was leading with Capablanca and Botvinnik, but in the ninth round he lost in a tough fight to Alekhine, and in the 13th he made the 'oversight of the century' in his game with Lasker... Even so, the Dutchman's overall result was quite high: a share of third place with Fine and Reshevsky, only half a point behind Capa and Botvinnik, but ahead of Alekhine, Lasker, Flohr, Bogoljubow...

In the next two tournaments Euwe not only finished ahead of his future opponent in the return match, but also confidently defeated him in their individual meetings – with Black in Amsterdam 1936 (1-2. Euwe and Fine – 5 out of 7; 3. Alekhine – 4½) and with White in Bad Nauheim 1937 (1. Euwe – 4 out of 6; 2-3. Alekhine and Bogoljubow – 3½).

In the last event before the battle for the crown, the World Olympiad in Stockholm (August 1937), the champion started with 6 out of 6(!), but then tired, again began making oversights, and in the end, by scoring 8½ out of 12, took third place on top board, behind Flohr and Keres. And the team competition was won by a big margin by the Americans, led by Reshevsky and Fine.

At the FIDE Congress during the Olympiad it was discussed how subsequently, after the 1937 return match, matches for the world championship should be conducted (I should remind you that Euwe was the first of the champions to try and hand over to FIDE the responsibility for their organisation). The next match was planned for 1940 and on a vote the official challenger was chosen: he turned out to be neither Capablanca, nor Botvinnik, but... Flohr! At the same time FIDE, fearing for its prestige, scuppered the tempting AVRO project, according to which the forthcoming super-tournament of the Dutch radio company in 1938 would have the status of a Candidates tournament, and then this company would also have financed a match for the world crown.

In reply Euwe stated that the congress was clearly unable to resolve correctly the question of the world championship, and that therefore he was forced to again assume all authority. He recognised Flohr's right to play a match in 1940, but said that in the event of him winning the 1937 return match he was ready to play against Capablanca in 1939. Euwe's speech was greeted with thunderous applause...

Although, on becoming world champion, Euwe said with his customary objectivity that he was unlikely to sit for long on the throne, before the return match the Dutchman was in a more than optimistic mood. The chess world too thought that Alekhine's star was beginning to set, and the start of the match appeared to confirm these prognoses.

Game 20
M.Euwe-A.Alekhine
World Championship Return Match,
Holland 1937, 1st Game
Slav Defence D17

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4

5 a4 ♗f5 6 ♘e5 ♘bd7

Later in the return match only 6...e6!? was played: 7 ♗g5 (topical nowadays is 7 f3! ♗b4 8 e4 ♗xe4 9 fxe4 ♘xe4 10 ♗d2 ♕xd4 11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4+ 12 ♕e2 ♗xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 ♕d5+ 14 ♔c2 ♘a6 15 ♘xc4) 7...♗b4 (7...♗e7?! – *Volume 1, Game No.132*) and then:

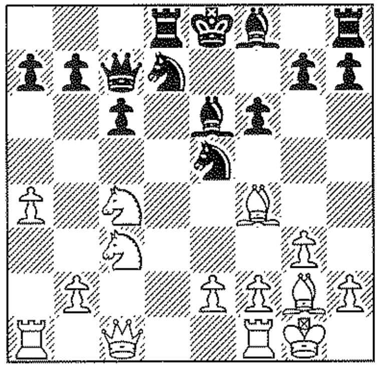
1) 8 ♘xc4 ♕d5 9 ♗xf6 (9 ♕b3!? ♘a6 10 0-0-0) 9...♕xc4 (9...gxf6!?) 10 ♕d2 gxf6 11 e4 ♕b3 12 exf5 ♘d7 13 fxe6 fxe6 14 ♗e2 0-0-0 with equality (Alekhine-Euwe, Holland 2nd matchgame 1937);

2) 8 f3 h6! 9 ♗xf6 (9 ♗h4 c5 10 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 11 ♔xd1 ♘bd7 etc.) 9...gxf6 10 ♘xc4 c5 11 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 12 ♖xd1 ♗c2 13 ♖c1 ♗b3 14 ♘d2 ♗xc3 15 ♖xc3 ♗xa4 16 e4 ♔e7 is also level (Euwe-Alekhine, Holland 11th matchgame 1937).

As a result, Euwe switched to the quiet 6 e3 e6 7 ♗xc4 (*Game No.21*) with White, and with Black he altogether gave up the Slav Defence in favour of the Queen's Gambit or 1...♘f6 2 c4 e6.

7 ♘xc4 ♕c7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗f4 ♘fd7 11 ♗g2 f6 (11...g5!?) **12 0-0 ♖d8** (12...♘c5!? – cf. *Game No.14*) **13 ♕c1 ♗e6**

Alekhine tries Euwe's idea (*Game No.15*), but he again runs into an opening surprise.



14 ♘e4!

Maintaining the pressure by playing this knight to an excellent square. At that time this novelty, originating from the game Turn-Ojanen (Stockholm Olympiad 1937), which was unknown to Alekhine, struck a serious blow to the 6...♘bd7 variation.

14...♗b4

'Black wishes to castle as quickly as possible, since the d6-weakness may otherwise prove fatal. After 14...♗xc4 15 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 16 ♗xc7 ♖c8 17 ♗f4 White has the better endgame because of his two bishops (Euwe). Black also fails to equalise completely by 14...♗e7 15 a5.

15 a5 0-0

With the knight at c4 the a5-pawn is defended and there is no point in fixing it with 15...a6 (as in *Game No.15*): this is both a weakening, and the loss of a tempo, for example: 16 ♖a4 ♗e7 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♗e3 (Botvinnik). As before, 15...♗xc4 is bad after 16 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 17 ♗xc7 ♖c8 18 ♗f4 – 18...♘xa5? 19 ♖a4 or 18...♗xa5? 19 b3 and wins.

16 a6

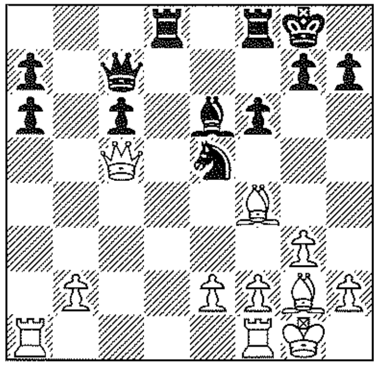
Breaking up Black's queenside and improving the prospects of the g2-bishop. In the event of 16 ♖a4 ♗e7 17 ♘xe5 (17 ♖d1 ♘c5 18 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 19 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 20 ♘xe5 fxe5 21 ♗g5 ♖d7 is equal) 17...♘xe5 18 ♘c5 ♗c8 or 18...♗xc5 19 ♕xc5 a6 it is not easy for White to strengthen his position (Botvinnik).

Euwe thought that it was more advantageous to play 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘c5 ♗xc5 (17...♗c8? 18 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 19 ♕c4+ and ♕xb4; 17...♗f7?! 18 a6 b6 19 ♗xe5 fxe5 20 ♘d3 winning a pawn) 18 ♕xc5, but after 18...b6! 19 axb6 axb6 20 ♗xe5 fxe5 21 ♕xc6 ♕xc6 22 ♗xc6 ♖d2 23 b4 ♖xe2 24 ♖a6 ♖b8 an equal endgame is reached.

16...bxa6?!

This nervy move was not even considered by Euwe: 'Correct was 16...b6, the point of which is that if 17 ♘xe5 then 17...♘xe5 18 ♗xe5 ♕xe5! with a good position; 19 ♕xc6 would be bad because of 19...♖c8 20 ♕a4 (20 ♕b7?? ♖c7 and the queen is trapped) 20...♖c4 etc. The best reply is 18 ♕e3, when White still maintains a slight initiative.' But I am not convinced of this: 18...♕e7 (18...♖fe8!?) 19 ♗xe5 fxe5 20 ♖fd1 ♗d5 is level. Perhaps stronger is 17 ♕c2!? with slight, but persistent pressure: 17... ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4+ ♘xc4 19 ♗xc7 ♖c8 20 ♗f4. These variations suggest that in fact 16...b5! was best.

17 ♘xe5 (17 ♖xa6? ♕b7!) **17...♘xe5** (17...fxe5? 18 ♘g5!) **18 ♘c5 ♗xc5** (18...♗c8? 19 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 20 ♕c4+ and ♕xb4 has already been considered) **19 ♕xc5**



19...g5?

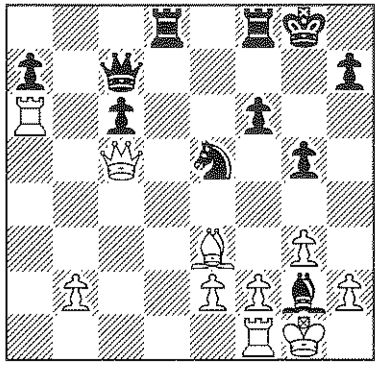
'Black no longer has any satisfactory continuation,' considers Euwe. 'The idea of the text move is to unpin his knight, but he weakens his king position at the same time. 19...♕b6 (*! – G.K.*) was worth considering, but White can then either win a pawn by 20 ♕xb6 axb6 21 ♖xa6, or, even stronger, reply 20 ♕c3! avoiding the exchange of queens and maintaining the pressure.

This last assertion is questionable on account of 20...♗d5 21 e4 ♗f7, when 22 ♗xe5 fxe5 23 ♕xe5?! ♗c4! will not do. On the other hand, 20 ♕xb6 (20 ♖ac1 ♕xb2) 20...axb6 21 ♖xa6? is simply bad because of 21...♗c4 22 ♖xb6 ♗xe2 23 ♖e1 ♘f3+, while after 21 ♗xe5 fxe5 22 ♖xa6 (or 22 ♗xc6 a5) 22....♗c4! 23 ♖xb6 ♗xe2 24 ♖e1 (or 24 ♖a1 ♖b8! 25 ♖xc6 ♖xb2) 24...♗b5 25 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 26 ♖xc6 ♖d2 Black gains a draw (Botvinnik).

20 ♗e3! (retaining the two bishops) **20...♗d5**

At the cost of a pawn Black exchanges one of the formidable bishops.

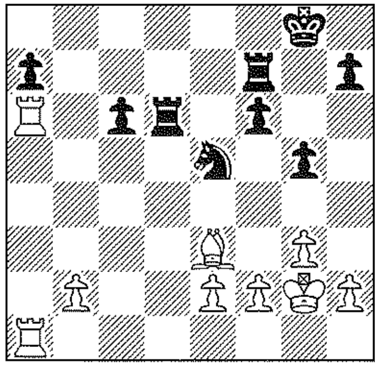
21 ♖xa6 ♗xg2



22 ♔xg2

But not 22 ♖xa7? ♗xf1! 23 ♖xc7 ♗xe2 and White is in difficulties (the threat is mate in three). The difficulties, however, can be overcome: 24 f4! ♖d1+ 25 ♔f2 ♘d3+ 26 ♔xe2 ♘xc5 27 ♔xd1 ♘d3 28 fxg5 fxg5 29 b3 with winning chances. On the other hand, after 23...♖d1! 24 ♕c2 ♗xe2+ 25 ♔g2 ♗f3+ 26 ♔h3 ♘f7! with the threat of 27...g4+ 28 ♔h4 ♖h1 White's position is indeed unenviable!

22...♖f7 23 ♖fa1 (but not 23 ♖xa7? ♕xa7 24 ♕xa7 ♖xa7 25 ♗xa7 ♖d2 equalising) **23...♕d6 24 ♕xd6 ♖xd6**



25 ♖xa7

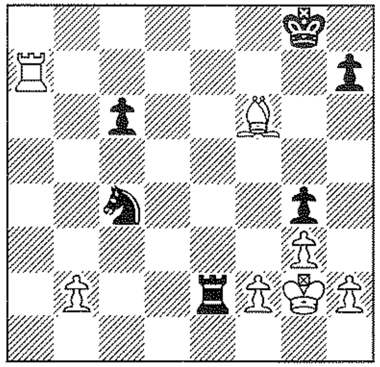
'25 b4 may have been better; it was in any case a bit simpler.' (Euwe)

25...♖xa7 26 ♖xa7 ♘c4 27 ♗c5 ♖e6 (if 27...♖d2 White was intending 28 ♗e7 or 28 b3 ♘e5 29 ♗e7! ♖xe2 30 ♗xf6 ♘d3 31 ♗d4) **28 ♗d4**

'Also good was 28 b3 ♘d2 29 ♗e3, since after 29...♘xb3 30 ♖a3 Black must lose at least the exchange.' (Euwe) However, 29...♘e4 prolongs the struggle (30 g4!? etc.).

28...♖xe2 29 ♗xf6 g4

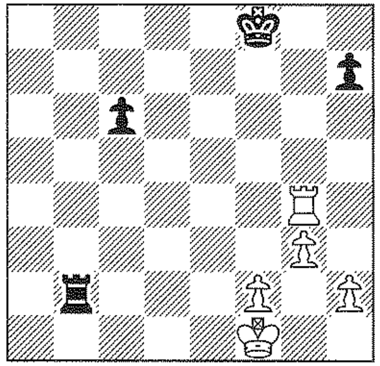
Not 29...♘xb2? in view of 30 ♖a2, while if 29...h6, then 30 ♖g7+ ♔f8 31 ♖c7 with the threat of ♗g7+.



30 ♔f1! (avoiding a pretty trap: 30 ♖g7+?! ♔f8 31 ♖xg4? ♘e3+ 32 ♔f3 ♘xg4 33 ♔xe2 ♘xf6) **30...♖c2** (30...♖e6 31 ♗c3!) **31 ♖g7+ ♔f8 32 ♖xg4 ♘xb2 33 ♗xb2**

The simplest, since the rook endgame is easily won for White, who creates a pair of connected passed pawns on the kingside.

33...♖xb2



34 ♖c4 ♖b6 35 ♔e2 ♔f7 36 ♖h4 ♔g6 37 ♖f4 ♖b3 38 ♖c4 ♖b6 39 ♔e3 ♔f5 40 g4+ ♔e6

'Or 40...♔g5 41 f3 followed by ♖c5(+).' (Euwe) While if 41...♔h4 there is 42 ♔f4 ♔h3 43 ♔g5 ♔xh2 44 f4! etc.

41 f4 ♔d5 42 ♖d4+ ♔e6 43 f5+ ♔e7 44 ♖e4+ ♔f7 45 h4 ♖b1 46 ♔f4 ♖c1 47 ♖a4 h6 48 ♖a7+ ♔g8 49 g5 ♖c4+ 50 ♔e5 1-0

50...♖xh4 is met by 51 g6. A highly painful defeat, essentially due to the opening!

After five games Euwe was leading 3-2 and was full of optimism. But the catastrophe in the sixth game (*Volume 1, Game No.143*) sharply changed the course of the match, and in the end Alekhine gained a convincing victory: 15½-9½ (+10 -4 =11).

I have described the return match in detail in the first volume, in the chapter about the fourth world champion. It only remains to ponder over the question: why did Euwe, who was at the height of his powers, lose to an opponent who was on the decline. Malicious tongues joked that he had won in 1935 only because Alekhine was unable to distinguish a bishop from a knight... Regarding this, Euwe himself wrote: 'When I became world champion in 1935 I was playing more weakly than Alekhine; two years later I was playing more strongly, but I lost... Julius Caesar was right: to defend what has been won is more difficult than to win it.'

A year and a half of thorough preparation enabled Alekhine to understand the nature of his mistakes, to learn the lessons of his defeat and finally to solve the Dutch riddle. He, in contrast to Capablanca, would quickly pick up the tendencies in chess development, and so he was able to correct his play, he began acting more solidly, with less risk (with the exception of the crucial sixth game), he skilfully provoked complications and he exploited his colossal imagination and inventiveness.

By his own admission, Euwe was less well prepared for the 1937 match than he had been in 1935. By sub-consciously thinking that Alekhine was doomed, he partly lost his most important quality – methodicalness. And, strangely enough, he had 'become stuck', i.e. he was still at the 1935 level, whereas his opponent had made a step forward!

In addition, being the champion was a severe trial for Euwe. Whereas Capablanca and Alekhine were preparing for the title all their lives, Euwe was psychologically not ready for it. Being a very responsible person, he was concerned about the fate of chess and tried to bring order to the world championship system. This responsibility weighed heavily on him.

Finally, he was inferior to his opponent in motivation. Here I am in agreement with grandmaster Sosonko: 'The main cause of Euwe's defeat was his internal mood: the title has been won, I have justified the hopes of those who believed in me and helped me, the barrier has been overcome, life continues... The prospect of constantly trying to demonstrate his superiority in chess, relegating all other aspects of his life to the background, did not appeal to Euwe at all; he lacked the necessary qualities, but perhaps also the deficiencies, to remain world champion for long.'

It is appropriate to conclude the theme of the return match with the words of Botvinnik: 'In those years Euwe played with great strength and was a worthy champion. In a match against the Alekhine of 1937, who had fully regained his form, anyone could have lost.'

On Equal Terms with Keres

After losing the crown, Euwe was on the point of giving up chess, but in the autumn of 1938 his moral duty obliged him to play in the grandiose AVRO tournament. 'The Dutch greatly regret that Euwe has had to part with the title of world champion,' wrote Flohr on the eve of the first round. 'They take every opportunity to try and return this title to Holland.'

The result of this double-round event involving the eight strongest grandmasters in the world (1-2. Fine and Keres; 3. Botvinnik; 4-6. Alekhine, Euwe and Reshevsky; 7. Capablanca; 8. Flohr) showed that the illustrious champions no longer enjoyed their former superiority, that a talented younger generation was ready to replace them, and that a period of chess interregnum had begun. As for Euwe, he, as usual, lacked stability, the strong grip of a professional. After a painful defeat against Alekhine he was out of sorts for the entire first cycle, but then he became the hero of the second, defeating Fine, Botvinnik and Capablanca! With Keres, who took first place on the tie-break, he made two draws.

Encouraged by this result, towards the end of 1939 the 'Euwe committee' decided to organise a match between their protégé and one of the winners of the AVRO tournament. To general delight, the challenge was accepted by Keres.

On the threshold of this new trial, Euwe won several minor tournaments and became Dutch Champion for the seventh time, winning a match against Landau: 7½-2½ (+5 =5). The following game is highly characteristic of his style, in which logic, higher mathematics and the spirit of romanticism are organically interwoven.

Game 21

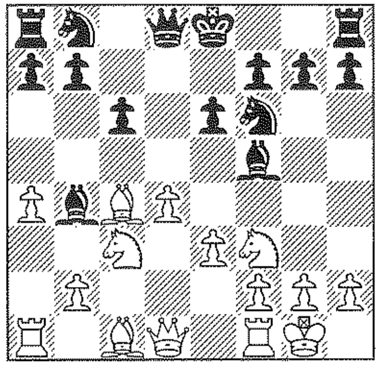
M.Euwe-S.Landau

Match for the Dutch Championship,
Amsterdam 1939, 6th game
Slav Defence D18

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♗f5 6 e3

The caprices of opening fashion: at that time it appeared that the aggressive 6 ♘e5 had been completely exhausted in the Euwe-Alekhine return match (cf. the opening commentary to *Game No.20*), whereas now the knight thrust is again considered White's best chance of gaining an opening advantage.

6...e6 7 ♗xc4 ♗b4 8 0-0



8...♘bd7

In the early 1950s Smyslov used to play 8...a5, but after 9 ♕e2 ♘e4 10 ♘a2! ♗d6(e7) 11 ♗d3 White has the advantage.

8...0-0 is a good alternative, since 9 ♘e5 is not dangerous in view of 9...c5!, for example: 10 ♘a2 ♗a5 11 dxc5 ♕xd1 12 ♖xd1 ♗c2! 13 ♖d4 ♗c7 14 ♘f3 ♘c6 (Capablanca-Euwe, Nottingham 1936) or 10 g4 ♗g6 11 ♘a2 ♗a5 12 ♘xg6 hxg6 13 dxc5 ♘c6 14 ♖b1 ♘b4 15 ♘xb4 ♗xb4 (Sämisch-Euwe, Bad Nauheim 1937) with equality in each instance.

9 ♕b3

Euwe considered this to be the refutation of 8...♘bd7. He had earlier played 9 ♕e2 against Alekhine (Holland 9th and 15th matchgames 1937), which has remained one of the main continuations (for example, Kasparov-Bareev, Tilburg 1991). Later 9 ♘h4 also became popular (*Game No.106*).

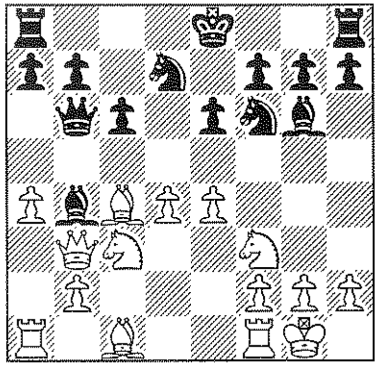
9...♕b6?!

A seemingly natural reply, and according to Euwe 'virtually forced'. In my youth I played 9 ♕b3 several times in the hope of 9...♕b6, in order to once again demonstrate at the board the correctness of the following bishop sacrifice.

Alas, instead of this I each time had to deal with the tedious positional problems after 9...a5! 10 ♘a2 ♗e7 11 ♘h4!? (11 ♕xb7 leads to a draw: 11...♖b8 12 ♕a6 ♖a8 13 ♕xc6 ♖c8 Smyslov-Flohr, 15th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1947) 11...♗g6 12 g3 (this was how I defeated Beliavsky and Dolmatov in the 49th USSR Championship, Frunze 1981), or 11...♗e4!? 12 ♘c3 ♘b6 13 ♗e2 0-0 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♘f3 ♘d5 with approximate equality, as in my games with Kupreichik (49th USSR Championship, Frunze 1981) and P.Nikolic (Reykjavik 1988).

10 e4! (a surprise!) **10...♗g6**

It turns out that the pawn is taboo: 10...♘xe4? 11 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 12 ♗xe6! etc. But perhaps the lesser evil was 10...♗g4!?



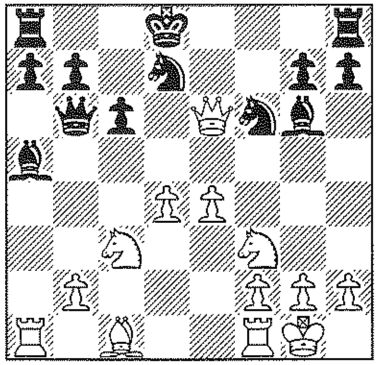
It would appear that Black has nothing to complain of, since White must go in for 11 e5 ♘d5 – how else can he defend his vulnerable centre? But the ex-world champion had a grudge stored up...

11 ♗xe6!!

'A promising sacrifice, but one of which it is impossible to say whether it is completely correct.' (Euwe)

Yes, this is a purely intuitive sacrifice – one of the most difficult in chess. To take account of all Black's defensive resources is impossible, and even the most insignificant blemish may become fatal for White: he is after all a piece down! There are few players capable of seeing, or rather sensing, what is concealed beyond the misty horizon...

11...fxe6 12 a5! (otherwise the bishop will run to e7) **12...♗xa5 13 ♕xe6+ ♔d8** (13...♔f8? 14 e5 ♖e8 15 ♕h3 would have lost a piece)

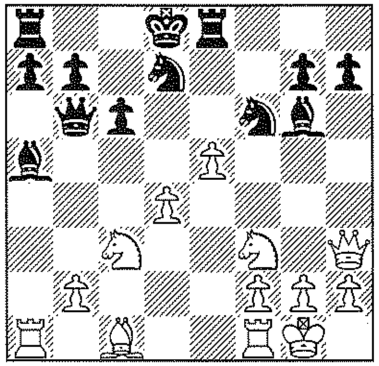


14 e5 ♖e8

This developing move suggests itself. It is dubious to play 14...♘e8?! (14...♘d5? 15 ♘xd5 cxd5 16 ♗g5+ ♔c8 17 ♖fc1+) 15 ♗g5+ ♔c8 16 ♘a4 ♕c7 17 d5! ♔b8 18 d6 ♕c8 19 ♕b3 and Black's extra piece is not much consolation.

However, half a century later the Estonian master A.Veingold suggested 14...♘e4! with the idea of 15 ♘a4? ♕b5 (15...♕c7!?) 16 ♘c5 ♘f8! (16...♘dxc5 is also acceptable) with a double-edged game (Novikov-Ehlvest, Tallinn 1986). But it later transpired that after 15 ♘xe4! ♗xe4 16 ♕f7! White has a persistent advantage: 16...♖f8 (16...♗xf3?! 17 e6!; 16...♗g6 17 ♕xg7 ♖e8 18 d5!) 17 ♕xg7 ♗d5 18 e6! ♗xe6 19 ♕g5+ ♔c8 20 ♖xa5 ♖g8 21 ♕h5 ♗g4 22 ♖g5! (Strauss-Lakdawala, USA 1992).

15 ♕h3!



15 ♕c4?! is imprudent: 15...♗xc3 16 exf6 ♕b4 17 ♕a2? (17 ♕xc3 is equal) 17...♗xd4 and White's attack peters out: 18 f7 ♖f8 19 ♘g5 ♔c8 20 ♕e6 ♗f6! 21 ♖d1 ♕c7 and wins (Wade-Stahlberg, Bucharest 1954).

15...♗xc3

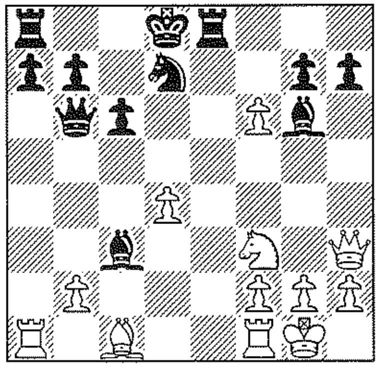
Knight moves are also rather dismal:

1) 15...♘g8?! (15...♘e4? 16 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 17 ♕h4+ and ♕xe4) 16 ♗g5+ ♔c7 (16...♔c8 17 e6 ♘df6 18 e7+ ♘d7 19 ♘e5 winning; 16...♘e7 17 d5! ♗xc3 18 d6 ♗b4 19 ♖ad1 ♘c5 20 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 21 ♕h4 or 18...♗xb2 19 ♖ad1 with a very strong attack) 17 ♘d5+!! cxd5 18 ♖fc1+ ♔b8 19 e6! with the murderous threat of ♗f4+ or ♕g3+;

2) 15...♘d5 16 ♘xd5 cxd5 17 ♗g5+ ♘f6 (17...♔c7 18 ♖fc1+) 18 exf6 gxf6 19 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 20 ♖xa5 ♗f7 21 ♘e5 ♗e6 22 ♖xd5+ ♔c7 23 ♕c3+ ♔b8 24 ♘d7+ ♗xd7 25 ♖xd7 ♖c8 26 ♕g3+ 1-0 (Radojcic-Kazic, Novi Sad 1945). Perhaps Black's only chance was 17...♖e7!? in this variation.

16 exf6!

After the 'solid' 16 bxc3 White's compensation for the piece would appear to be insufficient.



16...♗b4

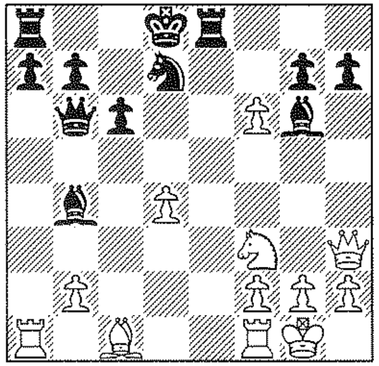
'It goes without saying that opening the d-file with 16...♗xd4 would only help White.' (Euwe) Well, let's check: 17 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 18 ♗g5 ♕d5 (18...gxf6 19 ♖ad1) 19 ♖fd1 ♕f7 20 ♖xd7+! ♕xd7 21 f7+ ♔c8 (21...♔c7 22 ♗f4+) 22 fxe8♕+ ♗xe8 23 ♕xh7, continuing the attack with level material.

Many years later the game Gavrikov-Dorfman (49th USSR Championship, Frunze 1981) went 16...♗xb2 17 ♗xb2 ♕xb2? (after the better 17...gxf6! 18 ♗a3! White's initiative more than compensates for the pawn) 18 fxg7 with an irresistible attack:

1) 18...♕b3 19 d5! ♕xd5 20 ♖ad1 ♕f5 (20...♕f7? 21 ♘e5! ♖xe5 22 g8♕+! ♕xg8 23 ♕xd7 mate) 21 ♕h4+ ♔c7 22 ♕g3+ ♔c8 (22...♔b6 23 ♘h4! ♕e5 24 ♘xg6 ♕xg3 25 fxg3! hxg6 26 ♖xd7 a5 27 ♖df7! ♖g8 28 ♖f8, then 29 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 30 ♖f8 and g8♕) 23 ♖fe1 ♖g8 24 ♘d4 ♕a5 25 ♘e6 ♗f7 26 ♕d6 ♗xe6 27 ♖xe6 ♕c7 28 ♕f8+!! ♕d8 (28...♘xf8 29 ♖e8+) 29 ♕f7 and Black has no defence;

2) 18...♔c7 19 ♘g5 ♕e2 20 ♕g3+ ♔c8 (after 20...♔b6 21 ♖fb1+ ♗xb1 22 ♖xb1+ the queen has to be given up) 21 h4! ♕e7 22 ♖ae1 ♕xg7 23 ♘e6 ♖xe6 24 ♖xe6 ♕f7 25 ♖fe1 and again Black is unable to coordinate his pieces;

3) 18...♕b4 (as played in the game) 19 ♘g5! ♕d6 20 ♖ae1 ♔c7 21 ♘e6+ ♔b8 (or 21...♖xe6?! 22 ♖xe6 ♕xd4 23 ♕g3+ ♔b6 24 ♖d6! ♕xg7 25 ♖b1+ ♔c5 26 ♕a3+) 22 f4! (the decisive pawn march) 22...♘f6 23 f5 ♗f7 24 ♕h4 ♘g8 25 ♘g5 ♖xe1 26 ♖xe1 ♕d7? 27 ♘xf7 a5 28 ♘e5 ♕d6 29 f6 1-0.

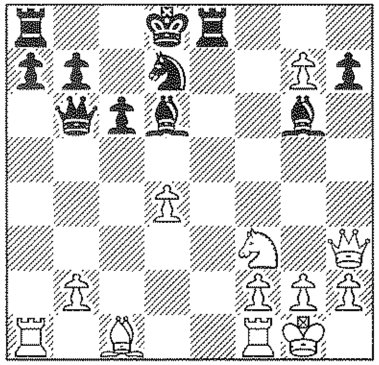


17 fxg7

'This passed pawn is going to play a key part in the forthcoming combinations.' (Euwe)

17...♗d6

A logical retreat. What is White to do now? At first sight, it appears that he has no real compensation for the sacrificed piece and that Black is able to parry the threats. But this proves to be an illusion!



18 ♘e5!

Forcing a decisive opening of the central files. Euwe's intuition did not let him down: analysis shows that in this open position the homelessness of the black king and the nimbleness of the white spy on g7 create a unique explosive mixture, and the destruction of the enemy fortress is inevitable.

18...♗xe5

'18...♕c7 runs into 19 ♘xg6 hxg6 20 ♕h8 ♘f6 21 ♗g5, recapturing the piece, e.g. 21...♔d7 22 ♕h3+ ♔e7 23 ♕h4 etc. After 18...♘xe5 White wins with 19 dxe5 ♗xe5 20 ♖d1+.' (Euwe) For example:

1) 20...♔c7 21 ♖d7+ ♔f6 with mate in 10 moves – 22 g8♘+ ♖xg8 23 ♕h4+ ♔e6 24 ♕e7+ ♔f5 25 g4+ ♔e4 26 ♖a4+ ♔f3 27 ♕a3+ ♔e2 28 ♖d2+ ♔e1 29 ♕f3 ♗xh2+ 30 ♔h1 ♖ae8 31 ♖d1 mate (Fritz);

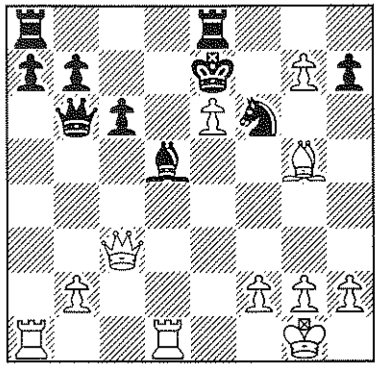
2) 20...♗d4 21 ♕h4+ ♔c7 22 ♕f4+ ♗e5 (22...♖e5 23 ♗e3!, but not 23 ♖xd4?? ♕xd4! 24 ♕xd4 ♖e1 mate) 23 g8♕! (the same universal motif) 23...♗xf4 24 ♕g7+ ♔c8 25 ♕d7 mating.

19 dxe5 ♗f7?!

Capitulation, but there is no reasonable defence: 19...♔c7 20 e6 ♘e5 21 ♗f4. '19...♘xe5 is met by 20 ♗f4 with many threats, e.g. 21

♗xe5 and 21 g8♕.' (Euwe) However, here 20...♘d3! 21 ♗g5+ ♔c7 22 ♕g3+ ♔d7 is not altogether clear, and so I would have preferred 20 ♗g5+! ♔c7 21 ♗f4 ♕xb2 (21...♕d4 22 ♕g3!) 22 ♖ae1 ♔b6 23 ♕e3+ and ♗xe5, regaining the knight with a decisive attack.

20 ♖d1 ♗d5 21 e6 ♘f6 (21...♗xe6 22 ♕xe6!, while if 21...♘e5, then 22 ♕xh7) **22 ♗g5 ♔e7 23 ♕c3 1-0**



An impressive rout!

And so, in the winter of 1939/40 Euwe met Paul Keres in a match of 14 games. It should be said that after the AVRO Tournament Keres had also won Margate 1939 (ahead of Capablanca and Flohr) and had performed splendidly at the Olympiad in Buenos Aires – 14½ out of 19, securing third place for Estonia! It was evident that this young grandmaster was, along with Botvinnik, the most realistic contender for the title of world champion. Therefore, in my view, his match with the ex-champion, who was still full of strength and ambition, had a certain historic significance. Whereas Nottingham 1936 saw the intersecting of the life lines of the declining 48-year-old Capablanca and the rapidly improving 25-year-old Botvinnik, here the same occurred with the 38-year-old Euwe and the 24-year-old Keres.

'Although formally this was a friendly match, it could be assumed that the winner would obtain the moral right to issue a challenge to the world champion. And this right again had to be won,' writes Keres. 'My intentions of joining battle with Alekhine with the help of the organisers of the AVRO tournament were not realised. In reply to a challenge, sent to the world champion after the tournament, he, unfortunately, imposed conditions such that I was unable to meet, and the negotiations were cut short. Other ways had to be sought.'

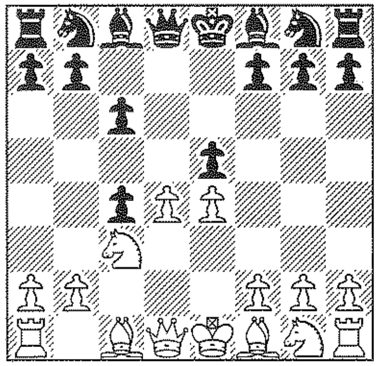
The Euwe-Keres match began with two relatively quiet draws: the players were probing each other. But after this there followed a unique series of ten decisive games, the longest in the history of 20th century matches!

Again let us hand over to Keres: 'The third game was won in good style by Euwe, and the fourth also brought the Dutch grandmaster success after I had rejected a draw and played extremely riskily for a win. The score became 3-1 in Euwe's favour, and there were only 10 games left. Therefore in the fifth game I faced a difficult task... After Euwe failed to find the best defence, I was able to gain an important win in an ending with opposite-coloured bishops.'

In the sixth game Euwe was close to a draw, but he did not seal the strongest move and after tenacious resistance during the resumption he nevertheless conceded defeat. The scores were now equal! However, in the seventh game, in a complicated, intricate position Keres unexpectedly blundered a piece and Euwe again went ahead: 4-3. Keres did not lose heart and in the next game he improved White's play in comparison with the sensational game Alekhine-Euwe (Holland 6th matchgame 1937). Then the two players exchanged mistakes...

Game 22
P.Keres-M.Euwe
Holland 8th matchgame 1939/40
Slav Defence D10

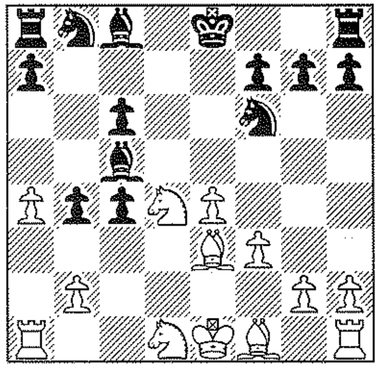
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 dxc4 4 e4 e5



5 ♘f3!

Instead of the eccentric 5 ♗xc4? exd4 6 ♘f3!!? (*Volume 1, Game No.143*), jokingly called the 'Muzio Gambit in the Queen's Gambit'. A modern attempt is 5 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 6 ♔xd1 b5 7 ♗e3 ♘d7 8 f4 (Karpov-Salov, Wijk aan Zee 1993).

5...exd4 6 ♕xd4! ♕xd4 7 ♘xd4 ♗c5 (7...b5 8 a4!) **8 ♗e3 ♘f6 9 f3 b5?!** (9...♘bd7 10 ♗xc4 0-0 11 ♔f2 ♘b6 12 ♗b3 ♗d7 was passive, but more solid) **10 a4! b4 11 ♘d1**



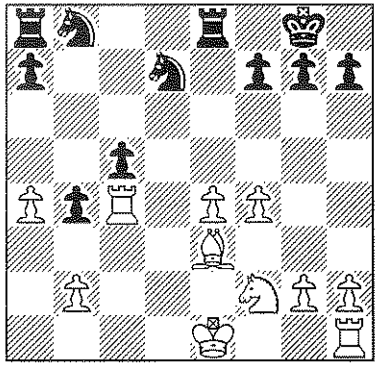
11...♗a6?!

After 11...c3! (11...0-0?! 12 ♘xc6!) 12 bxc3 a5 13 ♘xc6 ♗xc3 14 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 15 ♘xe3 bxc3 16 ♗b5+ ♗d7 17 ♔f2 0-0 18 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 19 ♖hc1 ♖b3 20 ♘d5 ♖b2+ 21 ♔g3 c2 22 ♖a3 ♘c5 23 ♖c3 ♘xa4 24 ♖3xc2 White has only a slight advantage (Seirawan-Hübner, Biel Interzonal 1993).

12 ♖c1?

The only way to retain the better chances was by 12 ♘xc6! ♗xe3 13 ♘xb8 ♗d2+ (13...♖xb8? 14 ♘xe3 ♖c8 15 ♖c1) 14 ♔xd2 ♖xb8 15 ♘e3.

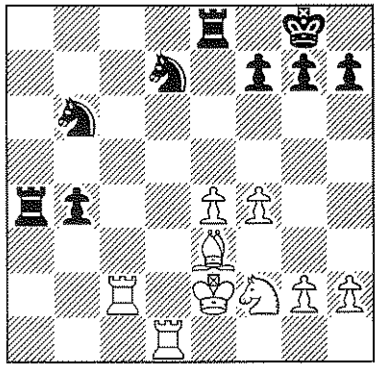
12...♘fd7! 13 f4! 0-0 14 ♗xc4 ♖e8 15 ♘f2 ♗xd4 16 ♗xd4 ♗xc4 17 ♖xc4 c5 18 ♗e3



18...♘b6?! (18...♘c6 19 ♔e2 ♖ac8 20 ♖hc1 ♘a5 21 ♖4c2 ♖c7 22 ♖d1 c4 would have equalised more simply) **19 ♖xc5 ♘xa4 20 ♖c2** (20 ♖b5 ♘c6!) **20...♘d7**

It was more precise to play 20...b3! 21 ♖e2 ♘c6 22 0-0 ♘b4 23 ♖a1 ♘a2 24 e5 f6 25 ♘d3 ♖ad8 with sufficient counterplay.

21 ♔e2 a5 22 ♖d1 ♘ab6 (22...b3!?) **23 b3 a4? 24 bxa4 ♖xa4**



25 ♖c6!, and, although not without some adventures, White won in the end: 4-4!

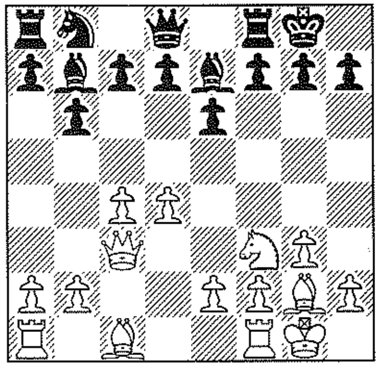
The turning point (and probably the most interesting game) of the match was the ninth one. 'Euwe played the opening inaccurately and lost a pawn, obtaining in return only highly problematic counter-chances on the kingside. In order to eliminate these possibilities I offered a positional queen sacrifice, after the acceptance of which Black's rooks and bishops began operating with destructive power.' (Keres)

Game 23
M.Euwe-P.Keres
Holland 9th matchgame 1939/40
Queen's Indian Defence E19

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3

In the fifth game White did not win any laurels in the Nimzo-Indian Defence after 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕c2 0-0 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗h4 ♘c6 (6...c5! 7 dxc5 ♘a6 is even better) 7 e3 (7 ♘f3!) 7...♖e8 8 ♗d3?! e5! 9 d5?! e4! etc.

3...b6 4 g3 ♗b7 (another idea of Nimzowitsch is topical nowadays – 4...♗a6!?) **5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♘c3 ♘e4!** (7...d5 – *Volume 1, Game No.94*) **8 ♕c2** (8 ♗d2!?) **8...♘xc3 9 ♕xc3**



9...d6?!

A 'careless move' (Keres). Later this was also played by Smyslov, Petrosian and Spassky, but three other continuations have proved more reliable:

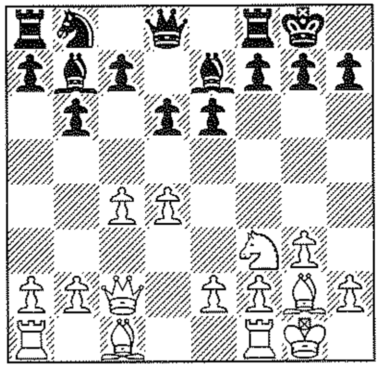
1) 9...♗e4 10 ♘e1 (10 b3 c5! Najdorf-Keres, Budapest Candidates 1950; 10 ♗f4 ♘c6!? Petrosian-Korchnoi, Il Ciocco 10th matchgame 1977) 10...♗xg2 11 ♘xg2 c6 12 d5 cxd5 (12...♗f6!? Korchnoi-Hübner, Solingen 6th matchgame 1973) 13 cxd5 ♘a6 14 ♘f4 ♕c8, as in the 13th game and also in Lilienthal-Keres (Leningrad/Moscow 1941);

2) 9...f5 10 b3 ♗f6 – the history of this variation can be traced through the games Tal-Botvinnik (Moscow 21st matchgame 1960), Petrosian-Botvinnik (Moscow 19th matchgame 1963) and Polugayevsky-Korchnoi (Evian 2nd matchgame 1977; Buenos Aires 2nd and 4th matchgames 1980);

3) 9...c5 10 ♖d1 d6 (an inferior choice is 10...♗f6?! 11 ♕d3 ♘c6 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 ♕xd7 ♕b6 14 ♗f4! ♖ad8 15 ♕c7 ♖xd1+ 16 ♖xd1 ♕xb2 17 ♘g5! Tal-Korchnoi, Moscow 3rd matchgame 1968) 11 b3 ♗f6 12 ♗b2, and now either 12...♕e7 (Vaganian-Karpov, 44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976; Polugayevsky-Mecking, Lucerne 9th matchgame 1977), or 12...♕c7 – this is a modern *tabiya*, stemming from games by Karpov played in the late 1970s to early 1980s.

In each case the play is of a manoeuvring nature and Black is close to equality, but he does not have an immediate draw.

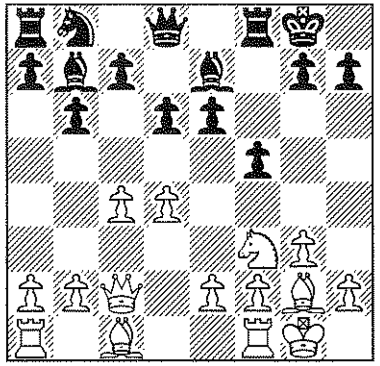
10 ♕c2 (10 b3 ♘d7 11 ♗b2 ♘f6 12 ♘d2 ♗xg2 13 ♔xg2 d5 14 cxd5 ♕xd5+ 15 ♕f3 c5 with equality in Najdorf-Keres, Bled 1961)



10...f5

'The only way of continuing the struggle for e4.' (Geller) After 10...♘d7 or 10...♕c8 there follows 11 e4, while if 10...d5, then 11 ♘e5!

'If 10...♘c6 there was the unpleasant reply 11 d5, for example: 11...exd5 12 cxd5 ♘b4 13 ♕b3 ♘xd5 14 ♘d4, regaining the pawn with the better position.' (Keres) But in my opinion, after 14...c6 the chances are roughly equal: 15 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 16 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♕xd5 ♗f6 and Black really should be able to draw. Therefore 11 ♖d1! is better, and it is not clear what the knight is doing on c6: 11...♗f6 12 e4 etc.



11 ♘e1

Fine's idea 11 d5!? e5 (11...exd5? 12 ♘d4!) 12 e4 is more energetic, for example: 12...fxe4 13 ♕xe4 (13 ♘d2 e3! 14 fxe3 ♖xf1+ 15 ♘xf1 ♗g5 – Euwe) 13...♘d7 14 ♕c2 a5 15 ♗e3 ♘c5 16 b3 with somewhat the better game (White's plan is ♘d2, a2-a3, b3-b4 and a possible f2-f4), or 12...♗c8!? (a recommendation of Geller) 13 exf5?! ♗xf5 14 ♕e2 ♘d7 15 ♘d2 ♗g5 16 ♘e4 ♗xc1 17 ♖axc1 a5 18 ♕e3 ♕e8 with an equal game (Stean-Larsen, Lone Pine 1978).

11...♕c8?!

This attempted improvement is not altogether successful, but nor was 11...♘c6?! 12 d5! exd5 13 cxd5 ♘b4 14 ♕d2! a5 15 a3 ♘a6 16 b4! ♗f6 17 ♗b2 ♕d7 18 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♘d3! with the threats of bxa5 and ♘f4 (Lilienthal-Botvinnik, 12th USSR Championship, Moscow 1940).

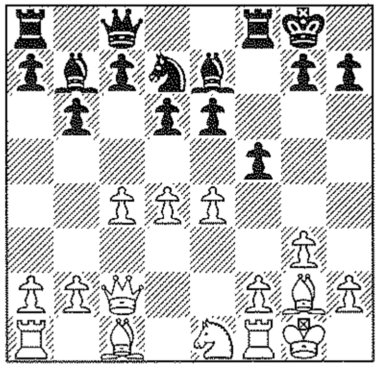
The game Alekhine-Keres (Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939), played not long before this, went 11...♗xg2! 12 ♘xg2 c6?! 13 e4 ♘a6 14 exf5 exf5 15 ♕a4 with advantage to White, but later Black defended successfully with 12...♕d7, while Keres recommended the active 12...e5 (and if 13 d5, then 13...g5!?) 'with good counterplay' – for amusement's sake I give the illustrative variation 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♘e3 ♕d7 15 ♖d1 ♕e6 16 ♘d5 ♗d6 17 c5!? bxc5 18 ♕b3 ♔h8 19 ♕b7 ♘d7 20 ♘xc7 ♗xc7 21 ♕xc7 ♘f6! 22 ♕xc5 f4 23 f3 ♖fd8 24 ♗d2 ♖d5 25 ♕c2 ♖c8 26 ♗c3 fxg3 27 hxg3 ♕h3 28 e4 ♕xg3+ 29 ♕g2 ♖xd1+ 30 ♖xd1 ♕f4, and Black is still afloat.

12 e4

Again White delays. 'If 12 d5 Black would also have continued 12...♘d7, and if 13 dxe6, then 13...♘c5.' (Keres) However, obviously stronger is 13 ♘d3! e5 14 ♘b4 e4 15 f3 with some advantage.

12...♘d7

The critical position of the variation.



13 d5?

At the most inappropriate moment! 'An opening advantage would have been retained by 13 exf5 exf5 (after 13...♗xg2 14 ♘xg2 exf5 15 d5 Black has to reckon with the weakness of his e6) 14 d5. He would probably have had to reply 14...c6! with prospects of counterplay in the centre.' (Keres) And, to be honest, after 15 ♕e2 ♖f7 I do not see any particular advantage for White: Black has reasonable counterplay.

White also achieves nothing with 14 ♕e2 ♗xg2 15 ♘xg2 ♗f6 (Vidmar-Szabo, Budapest 1940), so in fact he can only rely on a slight plus after the 'theoretical' 14 ♗h3!? g6 15 ♗h6.

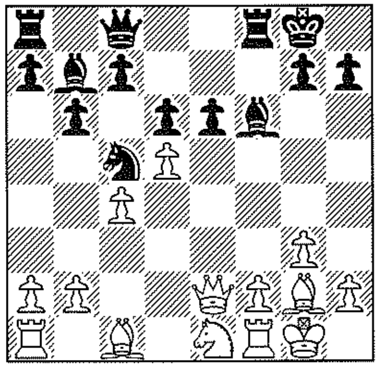
13...fxe4! (now Black obtains excellent play) **14 ♕xe4**

There is nothing else: if 14 ♗xe4?!, then 14...♘f6 is strong, while if 14 dxe6?! – 14...♘c5.

14...♘c5 15 ♕e2

'White pins the e6-pawn in the hope of gaining an advantage. After 15 ♕c2 exd5 Black has an excellent position: 16 cxd5 ♗a6, 16 b4 ♘a6 17 b5 ♘c5 18 cxd5 a6 or 16 ♗xd5+ ♗xd5 17 cxd5 ♕f5 etc.' (Keres)

15...♗f6



16 ♗h3?!

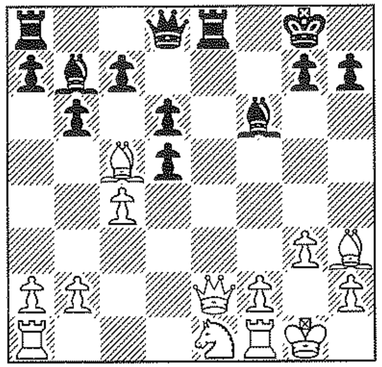
Consistent, but incorrect! A more sensible alternative was 16 dxe6 ♗xg2 17 ♘xg2 ♘xe6 18 ♗e3 'with equal chances' according to Keres and Geller, but in my view after 18...♕b7! Black nevertheless retains some initiative (say, with 19 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 20 f4 ♘d4 21 ♕d1 c5).

16...♖e8! (with the threat of 17...exd5) **17 ♗e3**

Observing 17 dxe6?! ♘xe6 and 17 ♘d3?! exd5!, White creates the counter-threat of 18 ♗xc5 and 19 ♗xe6+, but it is parried tactically.

17...♕d8! 18 ♗xc5 (18 dxe6?! ♘xe6 is again unfavourable) **18...exd5!**

With the help of this 'little combination' Black rids himself of any concerns about his weak e6-square.



19 ♗e6+?

'This check leads to the loss of a pawn, and the scales tip definitely in favour of Black. It was time for White to think about how to equalise with 19 ♗e3 d4 20 ♗g2 ♗xg2 (20...♕c8!?) 21 ♘xg2 dxe3 22 ♘xe3 ♗d4 23 ♖ae1 ♗xe3 24 fxe3 ♖e5 with a heavy piece endgame that is only slightly better for Black.' (Keres) And which, according to Geller, 'looks drawish'. I agree with this – after 25 ♕f3 ♕e8 26 ♕b7 ♖e7 27 ♕d5+ ♔h8 28 e4 or 28 ♖f2 the position is closer to a draw.

19...♔h8 (objectively, Black's position is already won) **20 ♖d1**

Also unfavourable is 20 cxd5 ♗xd5 or 20 ♗a3 ♕e7 21 cxd5 ♗xd5.

20...dxc5

According to Keres and Geller, simpler was 20...bxc5! 21 cxd5 (21 ♘g2 dxc4) 21...♗xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♕e7 with an extra pawn and a strong bishop against a knight (I would add 23 ♖d2 ♕xe6 24 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 25 ♘d3 ♖b8 winning). But the move in the game is also not bad.

21 ♘g2

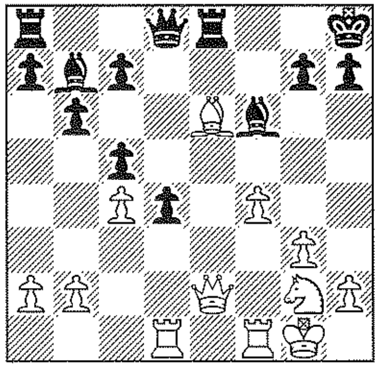
If 21 cxd5 Keres gives 21...♗xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♕e7 or simply 21...♗d4 (when 22 ♕c4 ♗xb2 wins), but the computer variation 21...♗xb2 22 ♕xb2 ♖xe6! is also good.

21...d4?

The tension of match play is felt. 'This restricts the dark-squared bishop and makes it harder to convert the advantage. 21...♗d4! was correct, and after 22...dxc4 the black bishops would have broken free.' (Keres) For example: 22 ♘f4 dxc4 23 ♕h5 ♕f6 24 ♗f7 ♖e5 25 ♘g6+ ♕xg6 26 ♗xg6 ♖xh5 27 ♗xh5 ♗xb2 and wins (Nunn).

22 f4?

An error in reply. White quite reasonably wants to support his bishop at e6 with f4-f5, but he should have begun with 22 ♖fe1! Now f2-f4-f5 is threatened, and the variation 22...♗c8 23 ♕g4 ♗xe6 24 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 25 ♕xe6 ♕e8 26 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8 27 ♔f1 'does not promise Black any great winning chances.' (Keres) Since the enclosed black bishop is weaker than the white knight! 22...♗g5!? is interesting, but here too Black would have had serious problems in converting his extra pawn.



22...d3!

Again opening the diagonal for the bishop, even at the cost of the queen!

23 ♖xd3 ♕xd3!

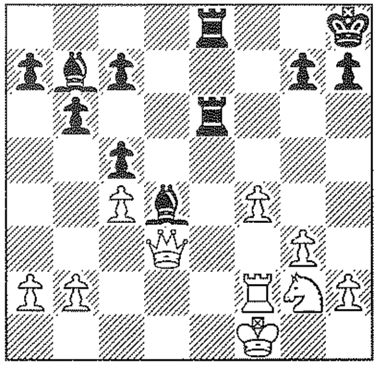
'Also possible was 23...♗d4+ 24 ♔h1 ♕f6 25 f5 ♗xb2 (*25...♖e7!? – G.K.*). However, the queen sacrifice is more elegant. Now all White's active pieces are eliminated.' (Keres)

24 ♕xd3 ♗d4+ 25 ♖f2

25 ♔h1 ♖xe6 with the threat of 26...♖ae8 and 27...♖e2 is hopeless for White, and so he offers a further exchange sacrifice – if only to get rid of the terrible bishop on d4.

25...♖xe6 26 ♔f1 ♖ae8!?

'This is much stronger than 26...♗xf2 27 ♔xf2 ♖ae8 28 ♘h4 (*although even here after 28...♖d6 29 ♕c3 ♗e4 White is in a tight spot – G.K.*). Now Black is ready to play 27...♗xf2, since after 28 ♔xf2 ♖e2+ he remains a piece up.' (Keres)



27 f5?

The final mistake, which was not pointed out by the commentators. It was essential to play 27 ♖d2 (but not 27 ♘h4?? ♖e1 mate) 27...♗e4 28 ♕b3 ♗f5 29 ♕d1 ♗h3. Here Euwe gives 30 ♖c2 g5! winning for Black, but 30 b4! is more tenacious, for example: 30...g5 31 bxc5 bxc5 32 ♖xd4 cxd4 33 ♕xd4+ ♔g8 34 ♕d5 ♔f8 35 g4 ♖e1+ 36 ♔f2 ♖1e2+ 37 ♔g3 ♗xg2 38 ♕f5+ ♔e7 39 ♕xg5+ ♔d6 and to win Black has to overcome technical problems, or 30...♖e1+! (this is simpler) 31 ♕xe1 ♖xe1+ 32 ♔xe1 ♗c3 33 ♘e3 cxb4 34 ♘d5 (34 g4 c6) 34...♗xd2+ 35 ♔xd2 c5 and wins.

27...♖e5 28 f6

This slightly delays the end. 'If immediately 28 ♖d2 (28 ♖f4? ♖e2), then after 28...♗e4 29 ♕b3 ♖xf5+ 30 ♘f4 g5 Black wins a piece.' (Keres)

28...gxf6

But not 28...♗xf2? 29 ♔xf2 ♖e2+? because of 30 ♕xe2 ♖xe2+ 31 ♔xe2 ♗xg2 32 f7 winning, while after 29...gxf6 30 ♘f4 ♗e4 31 ♕d7 ♖5e7 32 ♕d2 Black's advantage is only slight.

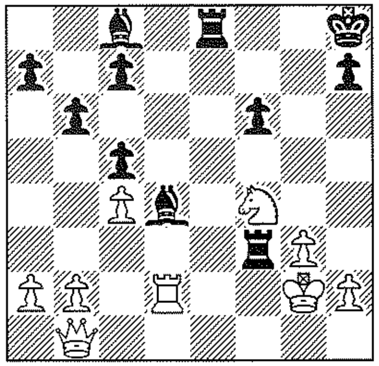
29 ♖d2 (not 29 ♖xf6? in view of 29...♖e2 or

29...♗xg2+ 30 ♔xg2 ♖e2+ and 31...♗xf6)

29...♗c8!

'With the threat of ...♗h3 and the invasion of the rook at e1 or e2.' (Geller) After 29...♗e4?! 30 ♕b3 ♖f5+ 31 ♘f4 the worst would have been over for White.

30 ♘f4 ♖e3 (30...♖e1+!? 31 ♔g2 ♖8e3 32 ♕c2 ♗g4 was also good) **31 ♕b1 ♖f3+ 32 ♔g2**



32...♖xf4!!

'A vivid illustration of the power of two bishops in an open position.' (Keres)

33 gxf4 ♖g8+ 34 ♔f3 (34 ♔f1 ♖g1+; 34 ♔h1 ♗b7+) **34...♗g4+ 0-1**

White resigned due to 35 ♔e4 (35 ♔g3 ♗f5+) 35...♖e8+ 36 ♔d5 (36 ♔d3 ♗f5 mate) 36...♗f3+ and mate.

This game was typical of Keres's style – lively and dynamic. It illustrated that the two opponents were nevertheless playing different types of chess: the new generation had made an important step forward in its perception.

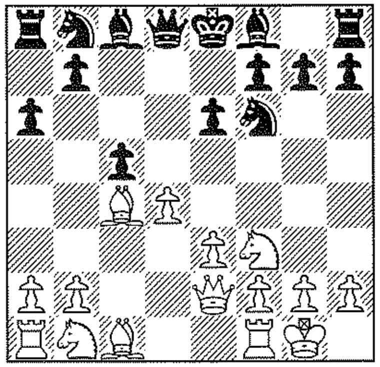
For the first time in the match Keres took the lead: 5-4. In the 10th game, Euwe, depressed by the two successive losses, made an incomprehensible mistake in the middlegame, lost two pawns and suffered another defeat. However, in the 11th he cheered up somewhat, refuted his opponent's dubious opening experiment and scored a good win: 6-5! It appeared that the match would retain its intrigue, but in the 12th game Euwe was simply unrecognisable and lost almost without a fight, and in the 13th he quickly went into an equal endgame with White and offered a draw.

Thus by reaching 7½ points Keres had won the match. But the regulations stated that the 14th game also had to be played. It turned out to be Euwe's best achievement in this uncompromising encounter.

Game 24
P.Keres-M.Euwe
Holland 14th matchgame 1939/40
Queen's Gambit Accepted D28

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 a6 4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♗xc4 e6 6 0-0 c5 7 ♕e2

Nowadays 7 a4, 7 dxc5 and 7 ♗d3 are all played, but attention is focused on 7 ♗b3!? cxd4 8 exd4 ♘c6 9 ♘c3 ♗e7 10 ♖e1 0-0 11 a3 ♘a5 12 ♗c2 (Kasparov-Ivanchuk, Linares 1999) or 10 ♗g5 0-0 11 ♕d2 ♘a5 12 ♗c2 (Kramnik-Anand, Dortmund 2001; Lyon 3rd matchgame 2002).



7...♘c6

The modern line is 7...b5 8 ♗b3 ♗b7 with a good game. The early development of the knight is nowadays considered rather premature.

8 ♖d1

It is stronger to play 8 ♘c3!, avoiding the exchange of the light-squared bishop, for example: 8...b5 9 ♗b3 ♗e7?! (9...♗b7 10 ♖d1 ♘a5 is better) 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 e4 b4 12 e5 bxc3 13 exf6 gxf6 14 ♕c4 ♕b6 15 ♕xc3 ♘d4 16 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♗a4+ ♔e7 18 ♗e3 with advantage to White (Euwe-Alekhine, Holland 5th matchgame 1937).

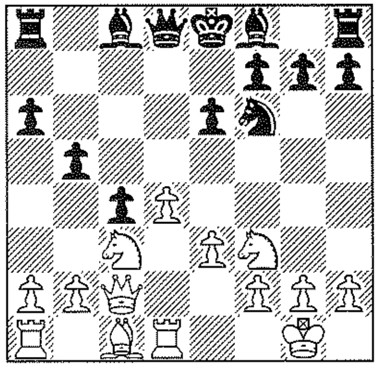
8...b5 9 ♗b3

White could still have retained the bishop, but hardly an opening advantage, by 9 dxc5 ♕c7 10 ♗d3 (Alekhine-Flohr, Bled 1931).

9...c4! 10 ♗c2 ♘b4 11 ♘c3

11 a3?! ♘xc2 12 ♕xc2 ♗b7 merely plays into the opponent's hands (Bogoljubow-Alekhine, Germany 7th matchgame 1934). 11 e4!? ♗b7 12 d5 is more active, but in this case Black has a good version of the 'Meran'.

11...♘xc2 12 ♕xc2



'Black has two advantages: the bishop pair and a majority on the queenside. White's majority, on the other hand, is in the centre, but it can only become dangerous if Black allows it to with inaccurate play.' (Euwe)

12...♘d5!? (later Euwe played 12...♗b7 against Szabo – *Game No.26*) **13 b3?!**

A second-rate move; stronger is 13 e4 ♘b4 14 ♕e2 ♘d3. In the second edition of the Yugoslav *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* this position is judged to favour White, but with such a knight on d3, pawn on c4 and the bishop pair, Black's chances are certainly not worse: if 15 ♗e3 ♗b7 16 b3 there is 16...♗b4, while if 16 a3 – 16...♗d6 17 b3 ♖c8 with approximate equality.

13...cxb3

The most sensible reply. A less clear path is 13...♗b4 14 ♘xd5 exd5 15 bxc4 dxc4 (15...bxc4? 16 ♕a4+) 16 ♕e4+ ♗e6 17 d5 (17 ♘g5 ♕d5!) 17...0-0 18 ♖b1 ♗e7 (or 18...♗c5) 19 ♗b2 ♗d7 20 d6 and the passed d-pawn compensates for the defects in White's position.

14 ♕xb3 ♗b7 15 ♘e5 (with the threat of ♘xb5) **15...♘xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♖c8 17 ♕e1**

'17 ♕d3 would be met by 17...f6.' (Euwe) Although, this was possibly the best chance for Keres.

17...♗d6 (creating the threat of 18...♗xe5 19 dxe5 ♕g5) **18 ♘d3**

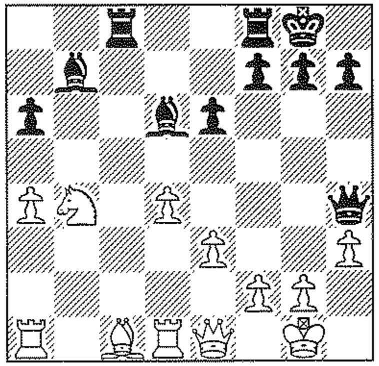
'Not very convincing.' (Euwe) But what can White do? If 18 ♗b2?, then 18...♖c2.

18...♕h4 19 h3 (there is nothing else: the endgame after 19 f4 ♕xe1+ 20 ♘xe1 ♗e4 looks too depressing) **19...0-0 20 a4 b4!**

A masterful pawn sacrifice! Especially since the following line suggested itself: 20...♖c2!? 21 ♖d2 (21 ♗a3? ♗xg2! 22 ♗xd6 ♕xh3 23 ♗h2 ♗e4 and ...♕f3 wins for Black – Dvoretsky) 21...♖fc8 (21...♖xd2 22 ♕xd2, but not 22 ♗xd2? ♗xg2! 23 ♔xg2 ♕e4+).

21 ♘xb4?!

'White is wrong to accept Black's pawn. Correct was 21 a5.' (Euwe) However, then 21...♖c2! is strong, with the idea of 22 ♖d2? ♖fc8 or 22 ♘xb4? ♗xg2! 23 ♔xg2 ♕g3+ 24 ♔f1 ♕xh3+.



21...♗f3!!

Very fine! 'The consequence of Black's previous move. White cannot accept this second sacrifice, as witness 22 gxf3 ♕xh3:

1) 23 ♘d3 f5 and White has no defence against ...♖f6-g6;

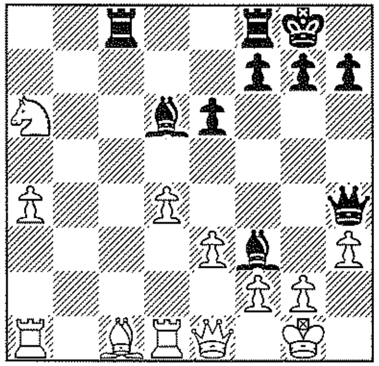
2) 23 e4 ♗h2+ 24 ♔h1 f5! 25 exf5 (25 ♕f1 is met by 25...♕h5 26 ♕g2 ♖f6) 25...♗e5+! (*less accurate is 25...♗d6+ 26 ♔g1 ♖f6 27 ♗g5 ♗h2+ 28 ♔h1 ♗f4+ 29 ♔g1 ♕h2+ 30 ♔f1 ♗xg5 – G.K.*) 26 ♔g1 ♖xf5 and wins (*for example: 27 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 28 dxe5 ♖c4 29 ♖d8+ ♔f7 30 ♘d3 ♖h4 31 ♖d7+ ♔e8 32 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 33 ♗g5+ ♔e8 34 ♗xh4 ♕xh4 – G.K.*);

3) 23 f4 ♗xb4, and Black has recaptured his piece in a very good position, as 24 ♕xb4 fails to 24...♕g4+ and 25...♕xd1.' (Euwe)

Of course, instead of 24 ♕xb4? here, 24 ♗d2 ♕g4+ 25 ♔f1 is essential. But for Black, instead of 23...♗xb4 it is stronger to play 23...f5! 24 ♖d3! ♗xb4 (24...♖f6?! 25 e4 ♖g6+ 26 ♖g3 ♖xg3+ 27 fxg3 ♗xb4 28 ♕xb4 ♕xg3+ 29 ♔f1 ♕f3+ 30 ♔e1 is unclear) 25 ♕f1 ♕h4 26 ♕d1 ♖f6 27 ♔f1 ♖g6 etc.

22 ♘xa6

An attempt to escape to a draw, by giving up the exchange. 22 ♖d3? ♗xb4 23 ♕xb4 ♕g5 24 g3 ♗e4 25 ♖d2 ♕h5 is clearly bad, and 22 ♘d3 ♕g5 23 ♕f1 ♗xd1 24 ♕xd1 ♖c4 is also insufficient.



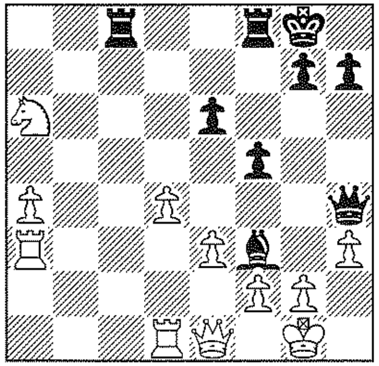
22...f5?

This is my question mark. 'With the threat of ...♖f6-g6, with the result that White is unable to save the exchange. The consequences of 22...♕g5 23 ♕f1 ♗xd1 24 ♕xd1 ♕a5 25 ♕f1! (but not 25 ♘c5? ♗xc5 26 dxc5 ♖fd8 27 ♕e2 ♖xc5 or 25 ♕e2? ♖c2!) are not totally clear.' (Euwe) However, in my opinion, here everything is clear – Black is simply the exchange up: 25...♖fd8 26 ♗a3 ♗xa3 27 ♖xa3 e5! 28 ♘c5 (or 28 ♕b5 ♕d2 and wins) 28...exd4 29 exd4 ♖xd4 30 ♘b3 ♕b4 and wins.

Meanwhile, the consequences of the move in the game are in fact unclear: it would appear that Euwe threw away the win!

23 ♗a3 ♗xa3 24 ♖xa3

'24 gxf3 (*!? – G.K.*) can be met by 24...♖f6 25 ♔f1 ♗b2, and White cannot save the exchange, since Black is threatening 26...♗c3, followed by 27...♕xh3+.' (Euwe) However, after 26 ♖ab1 ♗c3 27 ♖dc1! (this unexpected move was apparently underestimated by Euwe) 27...♕xh3+ 28 ♔e2 ♗xe1 29 ♖xc8+ ♖f8 30 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 31 ♖xe1 White, with his strong passed a-pawn, can successfully resist, and it is unlikely that Black's position is won.



24...♗xd1

'After 24...♖f6 25 ♖c1 ♖cf8 26 ♔f1 White slowly finds the way back to safety.' (Euwe) For example, 26...♗d5 27 f4! However, instead of 25...♖cf8? Black wins by 25...♖g6!! 26 ♖xc8+ ♔f7 27 ♖c7+ ♔f6! 28 ♔f1 ♖xg2. Therefore if 24...♖f6!? White should play 25 ♔f1, but here Black has a good choice between 25...♗xd1 26 ♕xd1 f4 and 25...♖c2!? 26 ♖d2 ♗xg2+ 27 ♔xg2 ♖h6 28 ♔f1 ♕xh3+ 29 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 30 ♔d3 ♕e4+ 31 ♔e2 f4! with an attack.

25 ♕xd1 f4!

Correctly playing to open lines.

26 e4?

Again my question mark: it seems to me that this is a serious mistake – a fatal weakening of the d4-pawn. 'Worth considering was 26 ♘c5, despite the possibility of 26...fxe3 27 fxe3 ♕f2+.' (Euwe) But here after 28 ♔h1 e5 the win for Black is extremely problematic: White has two pawns for the exchange and a powerful knight.

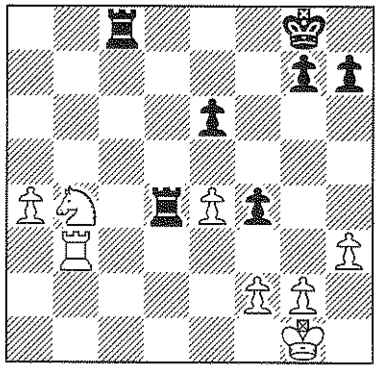
26...♕e7 27 ♖b3?

The decisive error, although White also has a bad position after 27 ♘c5 e5 28 ♕b3+ ♖f7 or 27 ♖d3 f3! 28 ♘c5 (28 ♖xf3? ♖xf3 29 ♕xf3 ♖c1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕d6+) 28...fxg2 29 ♕g4 e5 30 ♕e6+ ♕f7 31 ♕xf7+ ♖xf7.

27...♕d6! 28 ♕d3

Here Keres was already in severe time-trouble. It is hard to say whether it would have been more tenacious to play 28 ♘b4 (28 ♘c5?? ♖xc5) 28...♖c4 29 ♘c2 ♖fc8 30 ♖b2 ♕c7 31 ♘e1 ♖c1 32 ♕d2 ♖a1 33 ♖a2 ♕c1 34 ♕xc1 ♖cxc1 35 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 36 ♔f1 ♖xa4 37 ♘f3.

28...♖fd8 29 ♘b4 (29 ♖b4?? ♖a8) **29...♕xd4 30 ♕xd4 ♖xd4**



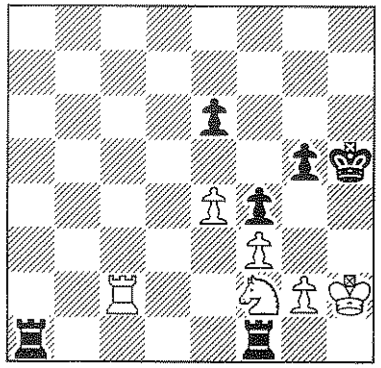
The endgame is easily won for Black, but there is still much of interest to come, because Euwe suddenly begins doing strange things.

31 ♘d3 g5 (31...♖xe4!? wins for Black) **32 h4 ♖xa4**

'Now Black is a full exchange up, but winning is still not easy, because there are pawns on only one wing.' (Euwe)

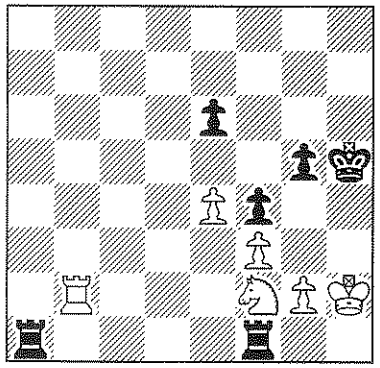
33 f3 h6 34 hxg5 hxg5 35 ♖b5 ♔f7 36 ♖b7+ (but not 36 ♖xg5? ♖a1+ and mate) **36...♔f6 37 ♘f2 ♔g6 38 ♖b5 ♖c1+ 39 ♔h2 ♖aa1 40 ♖b2 ♖f1 41 ♖c2 ♔h5**

The sealed move. Black could have won easily by 41...g4! 42 fxg4 e5 43 ♖b2 ♔g5 44 ♖c2 ♖a8 45 ♖b2 ♖h8+ 46 ♘h3+ ♔xg4 (Hannak) 47 ♖c2 ♖xh3+ 48 gxh3+ ♔f3.



42 ♖b2

'White can only sit back and wait. 42 g3 is met by 42...e5 43 ♖b2 (43 gxf4 exf4 loses more quickly) 43...♖a3 44 ♔g2 fxg3! 45 ♔xg3 (after 45 ♔xf1 ♖xf3, followed by 46...gxf2, Black wins as well) 45...g4! 46 ♔g2 gxf3+ 47 ♔xf1 ♖a1+ 48 ♘d1 ♖xd1+ 49 ♔f2 ♔g4 and wins.' (Euwe) That is, 50 ♖b8 ♖d2+ etc.



42...g4!

This breaks up the white pawns, since the deadly ...g4-g3+ is threatened and neither 43

♘xg4?? ♖h1 mate, nor 43 g3? gxf3 44 gxf4 ♔h4 45 f5 ♖g1! with unavoidable mate, is possible.

43 fxg4+ ♔g5

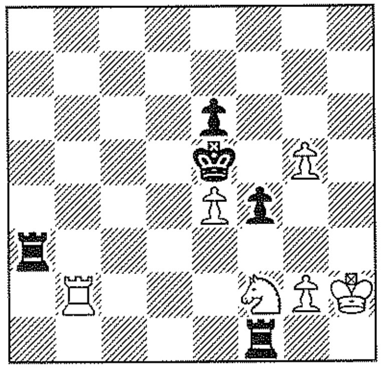
Euwe considers 43...♔h4 44 ♖c2 e5 45 ♖b2 ♖ae1 46 ♖a2 ♖xf2 47 ♖xf2 ♔xg4 48 ♖a2 ♖xe4 and 'closer investigation shows that this endgame is drawn'. But instead of 46...♖xf2? it is not yet too late for 46...♖a1 47 ♖b2 ♔g5.

44 ♖c2 ♔f6

According to Euwe, after 44...e5!? 45 ♖b2 ♖a8 46 ♖c2 ♖h8+ 47 ♘h3+ ♔xg4 48 ♖c7 ♖xh3 49 gxh3 ♔f3 'Black obtains a pair of connected passed pawns, but the white h-pawn is also very dangerous, so that it is very difficult to win this endgame.' But in my opinion, instead of 48...♖xh3?! Black wins without difficulty by 48...♖a8! 49 ♖g7+ ♔h5 50 ♖g5+ ♔h6 51 ♖xe5 ♖aa1.

It would appear that Euwe did not analyse the adjourned position very carefully. And in addition, Keres puts up some heroic resistance!

45 ♖b2 ♔e5 46 g5 ♖a3 (to combat the g-pawn)



47 ♘h3

'This makes Black's task easier, because the e4-pawn now falls immediately. It was better to play 47 ♖e2, to meet 47...♖g3 with 48 ♘h3.' (Euwe) But here too after 48...♖e3 49 ♖b2 ♖xe4 (49...♔xe4 50 g6 ♔f5 51 g7 ♖g3 52 ♘xf4 ♖xg7 is less clear) 50 ♖b5+ ♔d6 51 g6 ♖ee1 52 ♘f2 ♖xf2 53 g7 ♖ff1 54 ♔h3 ♖e3+ White would have lost.

47...♔xe4 48 g6 ♖aa1 (of course, not 48...♖g3? 49 ♘xf4! with a draw) **49 ♘f2+ ♔f5 50 g7 ♖a8 51 ♖b7 ♖g8**

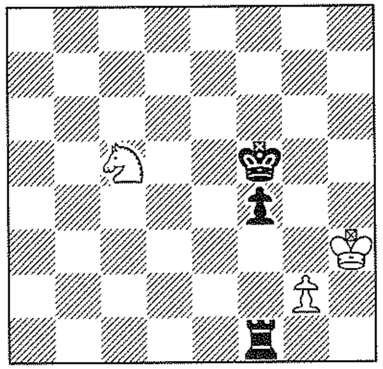
'Forced, as 51...♖xf2 52 ♖f7+ ♔g6 53 ♖f8 leads to a draw.' (Euwe) Although, after 53...♔xg7 54 ♖xa8 ♔f6 (but not 54...f3? 55 ♔g3with a draw) Black would have retained some advantage.

52 ♘d3 ♔f6 53 ♘c5 ♖xg7 54 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 55 ♘xe6+ ♔f6 56 ♘c5

After 56 ♘d4 ♔e5 White has no move: 57 ♘e2 f3! 58 gxf3 ♖f2+, 57 ♘b3 ♖d1! or 57 ♘f3+ ♖xf3! 58 gxf3 ♔d4 59 ♔h3 ♔d3! 60 ♔g4 ♔e3 and wins.

56...♔e5 57 ♔h3 (57 ♘d7+ ♔f5 would hardly have been any more tenacious) **57...♔f5**

With the obvious threat of ...♖h1 mate.



58 g4+?

The final mistake. 'Now the black pawn becomes a passed pawn, which is immediately decisive. But 58 ♔h2 ♖d1 would have been equally hopeless for White, because the knight remains cut off and will be captured' (Euwe).

In my view, after 58 ♔h2! Black's task would not have been easy. For example, 58...♖f2 59 ♘d3 ♖e2 60 ♔g1 ♔g4 61 ♘f2+ ♔h4 62 ♔f1 (62 ♘h1?! ♖e1+ 63 ♔h2 ♖f1 64 g3+ fxg3+ 65 ♘xg3 ♖f2+) 62...♖c2 63 ♔g1 and White somehow holds on.

But after 58...♖d1 59 ♘b3 ♔e4 60 ♘c5+ ♔e3 61 ♘e6 f3! (a machine move; a human would probably play 61...♖d5!? 62 ♘c7 ♖h5+ 63 ♔g1 f3 64 gxf3 ♔xf3 winning) 62 gxf3 ♔xf3 a position from Tablebase, fully calculated by machine, is reached, but for a human to find the way to win at the board is far more difficult: 63 ♘g5+ ♔g4! 64 ♘e4 ♖d4 65 ♘c5 ♖d2+ 66 ♔g1 ♔f3! (the clear signature of the computer!) 67 ♘e6 ♔g3 68 ♔f1 ♖d5! 69 ♘c7 ♖e5 70 ♘a6 ♔f3 71 ♔g1 ♖g5+ 72 ♔h2 ♖g2+ 73 ♔h1 ♖c2 74 ♘b4 ♖c4 75 ♘d3 ♖d4 76 ♘c5 ♔f2 and wins.

58...♔e5 59 ♘d3+ ♔e4 (59...♔d4? 60 ♔g2 draws) **60 ♔g2 ♖b1 61 ♘c5+** (or 61 ♘f2+ ♔e3) **61...♔e3 0-1**

The f-pawn cannot be stopped. A struggle not without its mistakes, but very modern and lively.

'Euwe won the last game in excellent style and was able to reduce the deficit to the minimum. The match ended with a score of 7½-6½ (+6 -5 =3) and should have become an important stage in the battle for the world championship,' writes Keres (incidentally, the organisers promptly agreed with the players to stage a return match, planned for 1941). 'But this battle had to be deferred – at that time the Second World War began...'

Within six months Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union and soon Keres was playing in a USSR Championship; then the Baltics were seized by the Nazis. They had seized Holland even earlier, and for the first time in their lives Euwe's daughters saw their father crying, when he heard the news of the capitulation on the radio... In the fates of these two great players of different generations there is something common: both were true gentlemen of the ancient game and national heroes of their small countries, and both spent all the war years in their motherland, occupied by Nazi Germany.

But whereas Keres, like Alekhine, regularly performed in German tournaments (and then laconically explained in the Soviet press: 'Circumstances forced me to play'), Euwe continued his teaching work and went abroad only twice: in the spring of 1940, not long before the occupation of Holland, he played in a small tournament in Budapest, dedicated to the 70th birthday of his friend and teacher Géza Maróczy (1. Euwe – 4½ out of 5; 2. Vidmar – 3½), and in the summer of 1941 in Carlsbad he contested a key match of 10 games with Bogoljubow.

'Of course, regarding this I was asked many questions,' writes Euwe. 'Not everyone thought that I should travel to occupied Czechoslovakia. But in so doing they forgot that my country was also occupied... In addition, I had a grudge against Bogoljubow. At that time I received many invitations to tournaments, but I accepted only the one that gave me the opportunity to do battle with Bogoljubow.' And the 40-year-old ex-champion confidently defeated the 52-year-old ex-challenger: 6½-3½ (+5 -2 =3).

In 1942 Euwe played only in Holland, and then he altogether ceased his chess appearances right to the end of the war. In those difficult times he was head of the Dutch Chess Union. Twice he wrote to Alekhine requesting his help in saving the well-known masters Gerard Oskam and Salo Landau (Alekhine's second in the 1935 match and director of the AVRO tournament) from Hitler's concentration camps, but these bold letters went unanswered. Later Alekhine explained that he himself was a hostage of the Nazis, had no influence over them and was unable to do anything...

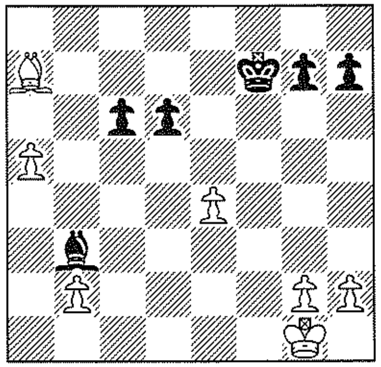
Race in Groningen

After Alekhine's sudden death in March 1946, the chess world was without a champion for the first time since the pre-Steinitz era, and the West was inclined to return the title to Euwe, and then to find a challenger and arrange a match for the crown. Such a prospect did not suit Botvinnik, and at the important post-war tournament in Groningen (autumn 1946) he endeavoured to demonstrate his superiority over Euwe, especially since neither Keres, Fine nor Reshevsky was playing there.

However, Euwe too arrived in Groningen in excellent form, and this marathon with 20 participants turned into a sharp race between the Dutch and Soviet champions. A piquant detail: at the opening ceremony Euwe and his daughters performed in Russian the song 'Shiroka strana moya rodnaya' (Broad is my native country).

In the first round he won a classic ending with opposite-coloured bishops against the Canadian Daniel Yanofsky, the namesake of the famous Franco-Russian master of the early 20th century.

Game 25
M.Euwe-D.Yanofsky
Groningen 1946, 1st round



27...♗c2

'Intending to liquidate as quickly as possible and force a draw. After 27...♗c4 28 ♔f2 ♔e6 29 ♔e3 d5 30 ♔d4! Black is facing difficult problems.' (Euwe)

28 ♗c5! (an elegant stroke!) **28...♗d3**

But not 28...dxc5? 29 a6! and the quick-moving a-pawn queens, the doubled c-pawns functioning, as Euwe put it, as an 'iron shield'.

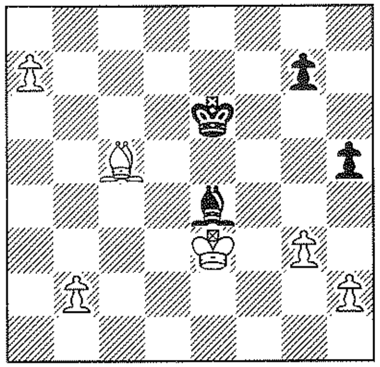
29 ♗xd6 ♗xe4 30 a6 c5! (otherwise 31 ♗c5 and a6-a7-a8♕) **31 ♗xc5 h5!**

Another accurate move. After 31...♔e6 32 ♔f2 ♔d5? 33 ♗f8! g6 34 ♗h6! White would soon have won the h7-pawn, and with it the game.

32 ♔f2 ♗d3!

'It is important to drive the white a-pawn to a7 in order to reduce the strength of the connected passed pawns.' (Euwe)

33 a7 ♗e4 34 g3 ♔e6 35 ♔e3



35...♗g2?

An imperceptible mistake, which leads to defeat. 35...♔f5! would have maintained a drawing fortress, for example: 36 ♗f8 g6 37 ♔d4 ♗g2 38 ♔c5 ♔e6! 39 ♔b6 ♔d7. Black failed to find this idea – shoulder-charging the enemy king.

Now, however, White demonstrates a veiled way to win: he succeeds in penetrating with his king to the queenside... via the kingside!

36 ♔f4! g6 37 g4! hxg4 38 ♔xg4

'It is important for White to take back on g4 with the king instead of with the h-pawn. This is because the h-pawn still has an important job to do.' (Euwe)

38...♗h1 39 ♔g5 ♔f7 40 ♗d4 ♗g2 41 h4 ♗h1 42 b4 ♗g2 43 b5 ♗h1 44 ♗f6 ♗g2 45 h5!

An impressive breakthrough – a textbook conversion of an advantage with opposite-coloured bishops.

45...gxh5 46 ♔f5 1-0

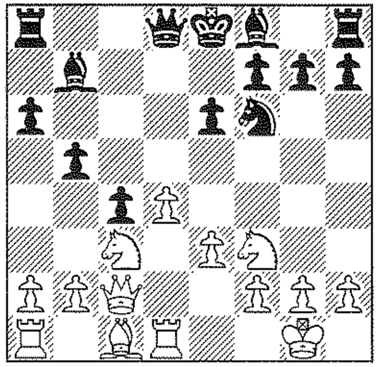
White's king goes to the assistance of its pawns, whereas Black's is cut off and unable to prevent it. Black resigned in view of 46...♗h1 47 ♗h4 ♗g2 (47...♔e8 48 ♔e6) 48 ♔e5 ♗h1 49 ♔d6 ♔e8 50 ♔c7 and b5-b6-b7.

Both the main favourites started with 4 out of 4! Then Botvinnik gained a fifth win – over Vidmar, while Euwe played a draw with Najdorf. But in the very next round the leaders again became equal: Botvinnik was unable to defeat the young USA Champion Denker, while Euwe scored a confident win with Black against the Hungarian László Szabó, who was to become one of the strongest grandmasters in the world, a participant in three Candidates tournaments.

Game 26
L.Szabo-M.Euwe
Groningen 1946, 6th round
Queen's Gambit Accepted D28

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 a6 4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♗xc4 e6 6 0-0 c5 7 ♕e2 (7 ♗b3!?) **7...♘c6 8 ♖d1** (8 ♘c3!) **8...b5 9 ♗b3** (9 dxc5) **9...c4! 10 ♗c2 ♘b4 11 ♘c3** (11 e4!?) **11...♘xc2 12 ♕xc2 ♗b7**

A variation from the opening debates of those times. Also good is 12...♘d5, as in the match with Keres (*Game No.24*).



13 e4?!

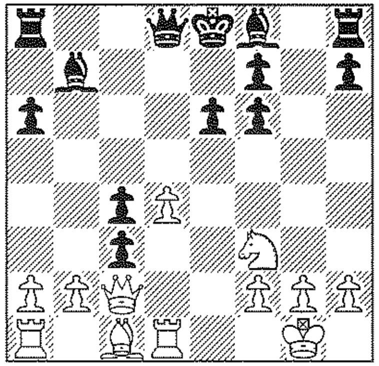
In principle, a weak move. 13 d5! is more energetic, and if 13...exd5, then 14 e4! ♗e7 15 e5 ♘d7 16 ♘xd5 0-0 17 ♕f5 (Euwe suggested 17 a4?, overlooking 17...♘xe5! 18 ♘xe5 ♗xd5) 17...♘c5 18 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 19 ♖xd8 ♗xd8, and although Black has some compensation for the queen, the initiative is with White (Euwe-Grünfeld, Zandvoort 1936). Therefore 13...♕c7! 14 e4 e5 is sounder (Reshevsky-Flohr, Nottingham 1936).

13...b4 14 e5

'The logical consequence of White's previous move. The combination 14 d5 bxc3 15 dxe6 fails to 15...♕a5.' (Euwe) But in the event of 14 ♕a4+ ♕d7 15 ♘e5 ♕xa4 16 ♘xa4 ♗xe4 17 ♘b6 ♖d8 18 ♘bxc4 Black only has a slight advantage.

14...bxc3 15 exf6 gxf6

'15...♗xf3 16 gxf3 gxf6 is also good, but Black has no interest in exchanging his strong bishop.' (Euwe) But in my opinion, after 17 bxc3 ♕d5 18 ♕e4 the chances are equal here.



16 ♕a4+

Euwe does not comment either on this, or on White's next move: in his opinion, White already has a lost position! But first, by no means clear is the variation 16 ♕xc3 ♖g8 17 ♗f4 ♕d5 (17...♗b4 18 ♕e3) 18 ♗g3 f5 19 ♔h1 f6, and after ...♔f7 Black has only a minimal advantage. And second, 16 d5! ♗xd5 17 bxc3 gives White an initiative that probably compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

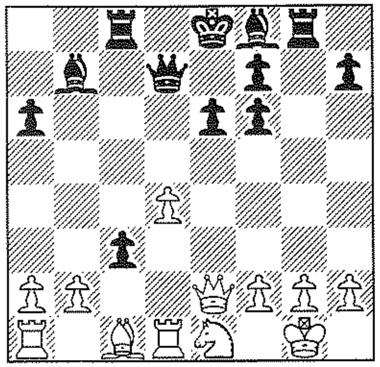
16...♕d7 17 ♕xc4?

But this is already a serious error. After 17 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 18 bxc3 ♖g8 (if 18...♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♗d6, then 20 d5! ♖hg8+ 21 ♔h1) 19

♘e1 ♗d6 20 g3 ♖ab8 Black does not have any great advantage. It would appear that this was the best way out for Szabó.

17...♖c8 18 ♕e2 ♖g8 19 ♘e1

19 bxc3 ♖xc3 (19...♕d5 20 ♖d3) 20 ♘e1 ♕d5 21 f3 ♗d6 etc. is also in Black's favour.



19...♕d5 20 f3 ♗d6!

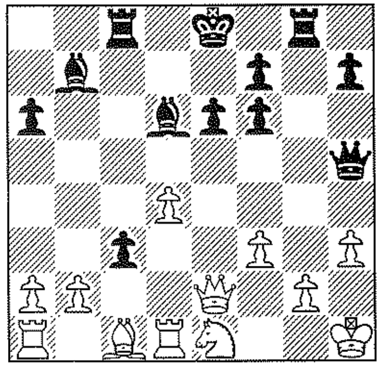
The bishops become rampant! The deadly 21...♕h5 is threatened. 'Black already has an irresistible attack.' (Euwe)

21 ♔h1 ♕h5

21...c2?! is tempting, in the hope of 22 ♘xc2? ♖xc2 23 ♕xc2 ♕xf3! 24 ♖g1 (24 ♕c8+ ♔e7) 24...♖xg2 25 ♕xg2 ♕h3 26 ♕xb7 ♕xh2 mate, but White does not need to allow this combination – the cool 22 ♖d3 ♕h5 23 h3 leads to an unclear position that is examined in the note to Black's 22nd move.

22 h3

An interesting moment.



22...♖g3!

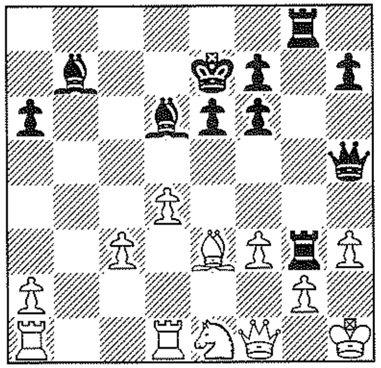
'The best move. 22...c2 also looks strong: 23 ♖d3 (23 ♖d2? ♕h4 24 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 25 ♘xc2 ♕g3 etc.; 23 ♘xc2? ♖xc2! 24 ♕xc2 ♕xf3 25 ♕c8+ ♔e7! *or 24...♕xh3+ 25 gxh3 ♗xf3+ – G.K.*) 23...♕h4 (*23...♖g3 24 ♖c3! – G.K.*) 24 f4 ♗xf4 25 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 and wins. But in this line White would be better advised to play 24 ♗d2! (24...♕g3 25 f4), when things are a lot less clear.' (Euwe)

But in my view, 24 d5! is strong, and if 24...♕g3 – the same move 25 f4! There is no mate, and the c2-pawn is under threat. Thus Euwe conducted the attack well, avoiding ...c3-c2.

23 ♗e3 (23 ♖d3 ♔e7 24 ♖xc3 ♖cg8 wins for Black, but perhaps better was 23 bxc3 ♖xc3) **23...♔e7 24 ♕f1 ♖cg8**

White has allowed the opponent to play his queen's rook to g8, and now there is no defence against the threat of ...♖xg2.

25 bxc3

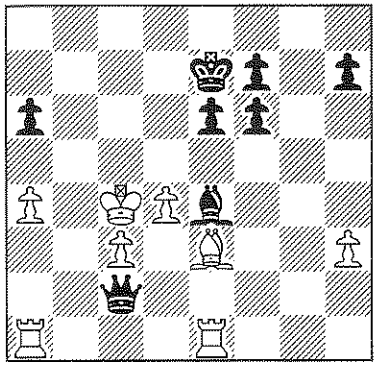


25...♖xg2! 26 ♕xg2 (26 ♘xg2 ♕xh3+) **26...♖xg2 27 ♔xg2 ♕g6+**

27...♗d5!? 28 ♖ab1 (28 ♖d2 ♕h4) 28...♕g6+ 29 ♔f2 ♗g3+ 30 ♔e2 ♗xe1 31 ♔xe1 ♗xf3 would also have retained a decisive attack.

28 ♔f2 ♗g3+ 29 ♔e2 ♗xe1 (eliminating the defensively important knight: the opposite-coloured bishops will merely be to Black's advantage) **30 ♖xe1 ♕g2+ 31 ♔d3 ♗xf3 32 a4?!** (even so, it was more tenacious to play 32 c4 ♗e4+ 33 ♔c3 ♕xh3 etc.) **32...♗e4+ 33 ♔c4 ♕c2**

The machine points out a pretty immediate win – 33...♗c2!



34 d5!

'White defends as well as he can; with this pawn sacrifice he gives his bishop more room to manoeuvre, which makes it more difficult for Black to weave a mating net.' (Euwe)

34...♗xd5+ 35 ♔b4 ♔d7 36 c4

Desperation, since 36 ♖ab1 ♗a2 37 ♖ed1+ ♔c7 38 ♖bc1 ♕e4+ 39 ♔a3 ♕c4 40 ♔b2 ♕b3+ 41 ♔a1 ♕xa4 is hopeless.

36...♕xc4+ 37 ♔a5 ♕c3+ 38 ♔xa6 ♗c4+ 39 ♔b7 ♕b3+

39...♕b2+ 40 ♗b6 ♕g2+ 41 ♔b8 ♕g8+ 42 ♔a7 ♕c8 43 ♖ed1+ ♔c6 would also do.

40 ♗b6 (or 40 ♔a7 ♔c7) **40...♕f3+ 41 ♔b8** (41 ♔a7 ♔c8) **41...♗a6 42 ♖ed1+ ♔e8 0-1**

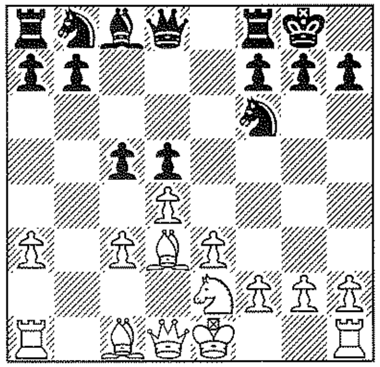
43 ♔c7 ♕b7+ 44 ♔d6 ♕xb6 is mate. In this game Euwe demonstrated both good preparation in the opening, and his customary aggression together with tactical resourcefulness.

By the middle of the tournament Botvinnik had broken away – 8½ out of 9! Euwe was 1½ points behind, having lost to Smyslov (*Game No.86*). The tense battle of the leaders in the 10th round ended in a draw in a classic rook endgame (*Game No.48*).

The fate of first place appeared to be decided, but the ex-world champion launched a desperate pursuit. In the 11th round Denker, who was sharing third place with Smyslov (they had 7 out of 10 and were only half a point behind Euwe), stood in his path. The American later recalled that on that day he had the biggest 'black-out' of his entire career.

Game 27
M.Euwe-A.Denker
Groningen 1946, 11th round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E49

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 d5 (4...0-0 – *Volume 1, Game No.95*; 4...c5 – *Game Nos.28 and 58*; *4...b6 – Game No.72*) **5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♘e2**



This was then a popular variation, known in opening theory as the Botvinnik Variation after his famous win over Capablanca in the AVRO Tournament (1938).

9...b6

A pre-war idea of Keres – to exchange the powerful d3-bishop by ...♗a6. The alternative is 9...♘c6 10 0-0 ♗g4 (10...♖e8 11 f3!) 11 f3 ♗h5 12 ♖b1 b6 13 ♘f4 ♗g6 (Reshevsky-Fischer, Los Angeles 3rd matchgame 1961).

10 a4

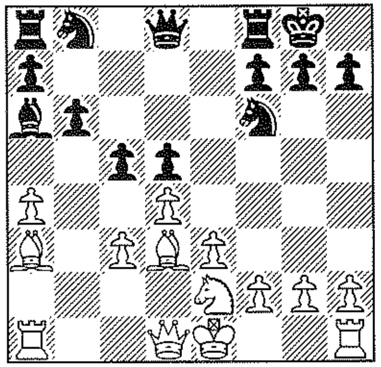
It is more natural to play 10 0-0 (this move, in contrast to a3-a4, is in any case necessary) 10...♗a6 11 f3!? (Euwe-Van den Bosch, Amsterdam 1st matchgame 1934), or

11 ♗xa6, as Botvinnik played against Capablanca (*Game No.37*).

But the point is that, not long before the present game, in the USSR-Great Britain radio match (June 1946), Botvinnik had played 10 a4 against Alexander, and Euwe was influenced by fashion... Denker was also well informed, and the result was a gripping theoretical duel!

10...♗a6 11 ♗a3

One of the ideas of 10 a4. In the aforementioned Botvinnik-Alexander game, after 11 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 12 ♗a3 ♖e8 13 ♕d3 c4 14 ♕c2 ♕d7 15 0-0 ♘b8 16 ♖ae1 ♘c6 17 ♘g3 ♘a5, the same position as Euwe had against Denker was reached a move later.



11...♗xd3

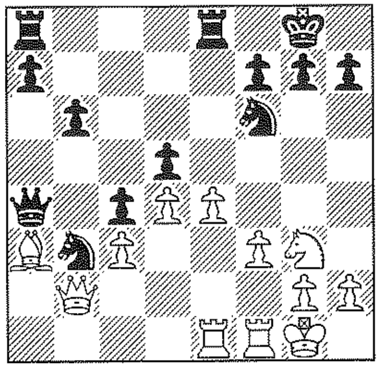
Little is changed by 11...♕c8 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♘g3 ♗xd3 14 ♕xd3 (Spassky-Yukhtman, USSR 1952).

12 ♕xd3 c4 13 ♕c2 ♖e8 14 0-0 ♘c6 15 ♘g3 ♕d7 16 ♖ae1 ♘a5

In the event of 16...♘e4 Black has to reckon with the clever manoeuvre 17 ♘h1!, for example: 17...f5 18 f3 ♘f6 19 ♘g3 g6 20 ♗c1 and then e3-e4.

17 f3 ♘b3 18 e4 ♕xa4 (following in the footsteps of Alexander and Capablanca, who captured this pawn when the bishop was on b2 – *Game No.37*) **19 ♕b2**

'In this critical position, where both sides have carried out their strategic plans (White – to break through in the centre, Black – to win a pawn), the chances are with White. He has a concrete plan of attacking with his e- and f-pawns, whereas Black's counter-offensive on the queenside is usually too late.' (Taimanov)



19...g6!

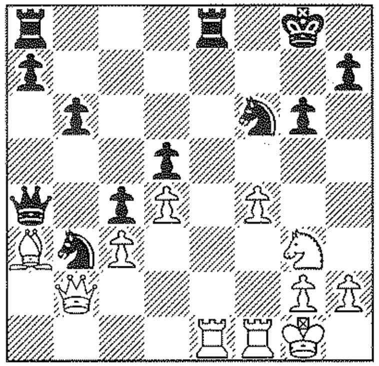
An improvement! The Botvinnik-Alexander game went 19...a5 20 e5 b5?! 21 ♗d6 (21 exf6! b4 22 ♕f2 was even better) 21...♖e6 (21...♘d7 22 ♘f5 b4 23 f4 and ♖e3-g3) 22 exf6! ♖xd6 23 fxg7 b4 24 ♖e5! ♖e8 (24...f6 25 ♖e7) 25 f4! with an overwhelming position for White.

The finish to this game was highly dramatic and impressive: 25...♕d7 26 ♕e2 ♖de6 (26...♖xe5 27 dxe5 and f4-f5) 27 f5 ♖xe5 28 dxe5 bxc3 (28...f6 29 ♘h5!; 28...♕e7 29 f6 ♕xe5 30 ♘f5!! winning) 29 f6? (29 e6!; 29 ♘h5!) 29...♕a7+? (29...♘d4!) 30 ♔h1 ♘d4 31 ♕e3 ♖a8 32 ♕xc3 (32 e6!) 32...a4?! 33 ♕xd4! ♕xd4 34 ♘f5 h5 35 ♘xd4 ♖e8 36 ♘f5 d4 37 e6! 1-0.

20 e5 ♘d7 21 f4 f5! (Black defends 'à la Capablanca'!) **22 exf6 ♘xf6**

Botvinnik recommended 22...♖xe1 23 ♖xe1 ♘xf6 'with equality'. However, after 24 ♖e6 Black still has to find 24...♘e8! 25 f5 ♘g7 26 ♖e5 ♖c8, since 24...♘g4?! 25 f5 ♖e8 26 ♕e2 ♘f6 27 ♗d6! gxf5 28 ♕e5 ♕d7 29 ♖e7! ♖xe7 30 ♗xe7 ♘e8 31 ♘xf5 leads to disaster.

But the main thing is that after 22...♖xe1 White can interpose the unpleasant 23 f7+!, and after 23...♔xf7 24 ♖xe1 Black is punished for conceding the e-file: 24...♖e8 25 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 26 ♕e2+ ♔d8 27 ♗d6! ♔c8 (27...♕c6 28 ♕e6 ♔c8 29 f5 gxf5 30 ♘xf5 ♔b7 31 ♘e7 ♕a4 32 h4 wins for White) 28 ♕e6 ♔b7 29 ♕xd5+ ♕c6 30 ♕e6 with real winning chances.



23 f5?

White attacks 'à la Botvinnik', but mistakenly: in the given specific case this method does not work! Euwe was let down by a certain dogmatism: he trusted in the proven examples, not sensing the nuances of the position. If he had, he would have played 23 ♗e7!, setting his opponent difficult problems:

1) 23...♔f7?! 24 ♗xf6 ♖xe1 25 ♖xe1 ♔xf6 and here not the obscure 26 f5, but the computer move 26 ♕e2!, winning quickly and prettily: 26...♕d7 27 f5 ♖f8 28 ♕e5+ ♔f7 29 fxg6+ hxg6 30 ♖e3 ♖e8 (or 30...♔g8 31 ♘h5! ♕f7 32 ♖f3) 31 ♕f4+ ♔g8 32 ♘h5! (as with Botvinnik against Capablanca!) 32...gxh5 33 ♕g5+ and there is no salvation;

2) 23...♕c6 (the best defence, which I did not find immediately) 24 f5 ♘c5!! (another machine trick – otherwise this knight is out of play; 24...♘e4? is bad in view of the powerful 25 f6! ♘g5 26 ♕f2 ♘f7 27 ♘f5! ♔h8 28 ♘h6! ♘xh6 29 f7 winning), and White has two continuations:

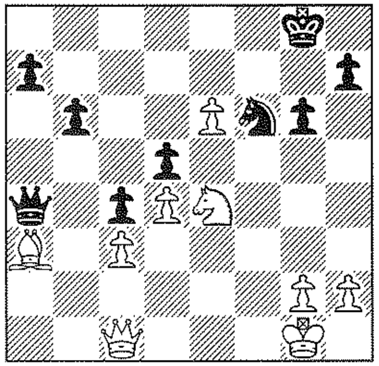
a) 25 dxc5 ♖xe7 26 ♖xe7 ♕xc5+ 27 ♕f2 ♕xe7 28 fxg6 ♖f8 29 ♘f5! (29 ♘h5 ♘d7) 29...♕c5 30 gxh7+ ♘xh7 (30...♔xh7 31 ♘d4!) 31 ♕xc5 bxc5 32 ♘e7+ ♔g7 33 ♘xd5 with the better endgame;

b) 25 ♕c2!? (this is perhaps somewhat stronger) 25...♘ce4 26 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 27 ♘xe4 dxe4 28 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 29 ♕xe4 ♖f8 30 g4 with a stable initiative, although the win is still a long way off.

23...♖xe1 24 ♖xe1 ♖e8 25 ♖e6 ♖xe6?!

It would be interesting to know what Euwe would have done after the cool 25...♔f7!? 26 ♕e2 ♕xa3! (26...♕d7 27 ♖e5 ♘a5 28 ♕e3 ♘c6 29 ♕h6! ♕d8 30 fxg6+ hxg6 31 ♖g5 ♖g8 is unclear) 27 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 28 ♕xe8 ♕e7! (previously only 28...♕c1+ 29 ♘f1 gxf5 30 ♕f8+ with perpetual check was suggested). There doesn't appear to be a draw: 29 ♕c6+ (29 ♕h8+ ♔g5!) 29...♔g7 30 ♘f1 ♘c1! (unexpectedly the knight returns to life!) 31 ♕xd5 ♕e1 and Black launches a counter-attack.

26 fxe6 ♘d2 27 ♕c1 ♘de4 28 ♘xe4



Now it should be a draw, but a mass of mutual experiences and mistakes still lies ahead.

28...♘xe4

It was thought that after 28...dxe4 29 ♕f1 ♕xa3 30 ♕xf6 ♕c1+ 31 ♔f2 e3+ 32 ♔g3 ♕e1+ a draw could be gained by 33 ♔h3 ♕f2 34 ♕d8+ ♔g7 35 e7 e2 36 e8♕ e1♕, but I found 35...♕f5+!, when White has problems: 36 ♔g3 g5 37 ♕c7 ♕f2+ 38 ♔g4 ♕xg2+ 39 ♔h5 ♕f3+ 40 ♔xg5 h6+ 41 ♔h4 ♔f7. But 33 ♔g4! immediately gives a draw: 33...♕f2 (or 33...♕e2+ 34 ♔g3) 34 ♕d8+ ♔g7 35 ♕e7+ ♔h6 36 ♕g5+ with perpetual check.

29 h3

In principle White has not yet risked anything and 29 ♕f1 ♕xa3 30 ♕f7+ ♔h8 31 h3 h5 32 e7 ♘d6 33 ♕xg6 ♕c1+ 34 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 35 ♔h1 was sufficient for a draw. But Euwe is playing for a win!

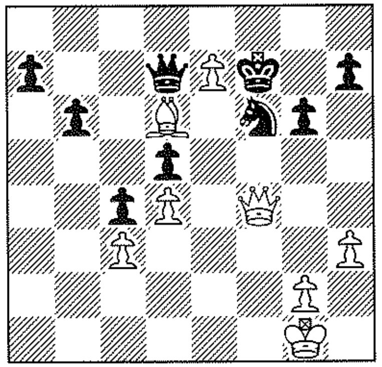
29...♔g7 30 e7

Another fighting move. Here too the modest 30 ♕f1 would have led to a draw: 30...♕xa3 31 ♕f7+ ♔h6! 32 e7 ♕c1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕e3 34 e8♕ ♕g3+ 35 ♔g1 ♕e3+, or 33...♘d6 34 ♕f8+ ♔g5 35 h4+ ♔h5 36 ♕f3+ ♔h6.

The commentators pointed out an amusing drawing variation: 30 ♗f8+!? ♔xf8 31 ♕f4+ ♔e7! 32 ♕f7+ ♔d6 33 e7 ♕d1+ (33...♕a1+ also interested me, but alas: after 34 ♔h2 ♕xc3 35 e8♘+ ♔c6 36 ♕e6+ ♔b5 37 ♕xd5+ ♔a4 38 ♕xe4 the knight is lost) 34 ♔h2 ♕e1 (I think that 34...♕d3! is simpler) 35 e8♕ ♕g3+ 36 ♔g1 ♕e3+, but in my opinion, more lively is 35 e8♘+!? ♔c6 36 ♕e6+ ♔b5 37 ♕d7+ ♔a5 38 ♕xa7+ ♔b5 39 ♕d7+ ♔a5 40 ♕xd5+ ♔a4 41 ♕xc4+ ♔a3!, although here too it is most probably a draw.

30...♘f6 31 ♗d6 ♕d7 32 ♕f4 ♔f7

If 32...a5!?, then 33 ♗a3 b5 34 ♕b8 ♕e8 35 ♕c7 was possible.



33 g4??

Overcome by a thirst for victory, Euwe oversteps the mark and makes a blunder, exposing his king. Of course, he should have retreated his bishop – 33 ♗a3! Thanks to the threats of ♕h6 and ♕b8 White would have retained quite good compensation for the pawn (for example, with 33...♕e6 34 ♔h2 a5 35 ♕h6) and could have hoped for a draw.

33...g5! (now White has a lost position) **34 ♕g3 a5?**

Here there were many decisive continuations: 34...♕e6 and ...h7-h6 (Chistyakov), 34...♔g6 and ...h7-h5 (Ragozin) 35 ♗e5 ♕xe7 36 ♕f3 ♘d7! 37 ♕xd5 ♘xe5 38 dxe5 ♕c5+, or, finally, 34...♕a4! with the threat of ...♕d1+ (Kmoch, Euwe) – I tried to find a defence after 35 ♕f3!, but without success: 35...♕a1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕b2+ 37 ♔g1 (37 ♔g3 ♕xc3!) 37...♕c1+ 38 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 39 ♔g1 ♕e1+ 40 ♔h2 ♕e6 41 ♗a3 ♕e4 and Black wins.

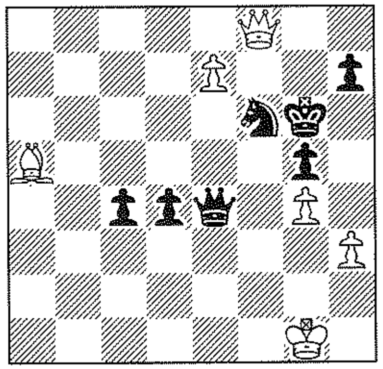
Denker's inaccuracy does not throw away the win, but it gives White practical chances, which Euwe exploits simply splendidly!

35 ♗a3! ♕a4 36 ♕d6 ♕d1+ 37 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 38 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 39 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 40 ♔g1 b5 41 ♕d8 b4

For the moment Denker is equal to the occasion: it was worse to play 41...♘e8?! 42 ♕xa5 or, of course, 41...♕b1+ 42 ♔g2 ♕a2+ 43 ♔g1 ♕xa3?? 44 ♕f8+ ♔e6 45 e8♕+ ♘xe8 46 ♕xa3 and wins.

42 ♕f8+ ♔g6 43 cxb4 ♕xd4+ 44 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 45 ♔g1 axb4 46 ♗xb4 d4 47 ♗a5!

Euwe finds the only way to resist: the manoeuvre of his bishop to d8 with the threat of ♕xf6+ and e8♕+.



47...c3?

The most obvious move, but not the most accurate. According to Denker, '47...♕e6 was better', but after 48 ♗d8! (with the threat of ♕xf6+) 48...♕f7 49 ♗b6! White would have gained a draw, for example: 49...d3 50 h4! gxh4 51 ♗e3 ♕e6 52 ♕h6+ ♔f7 53 ♕f8+ with perpetual check.

Also unclear is 47...♕e5 48 ♔g2! (but not 48 ♗d8? ♕g3+ 49 ♔f1 ♕xh3+ 50 ♔e1 ♕h1+ 51 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 52 ♔e1 ♕g1+).

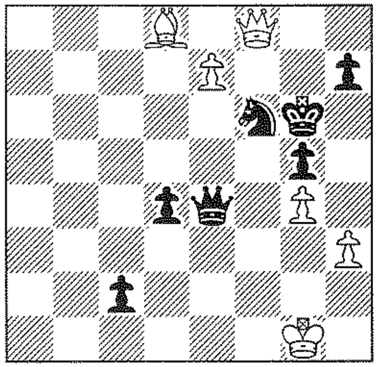
However, there was a technical win by 47...♕b1+! 48 ♔g2 ♕a2+ 49 ♔g1 ♕xa5 50 e8♕+ ♘xe8 51 ♕xe8+ ♔f6 52 ♕f8+! (in my opinion, the best chance; 52 ♕h8+ ♔e6 53 ♕xd4 ♕e1+ 54 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 55 ♔g1 h6 wins for Black) 52...♔e6 53 ♕h6+ ♔d7 54 ♕xh7+ ♔c6 55 ♕g6+ ♔b5! (55...♔b7? 56 ♕e4+) 56 ♕xg5+ ♔a4 57 ♕xa5+ (in the pawn endgame White loses by one tempo, while in the queen endgame he has a 'bad' king and the black pawns are two tempi closer to the queening squares) 57...♔xa5 58 ♔f2 c3 59 ♔e2 ♔b4 60 g5 c2 61 ♔d2 ♔b3.

'Here I was told,' recalls Denker, 'that my wife was telephoning from New York. I had quite a lot of time on my clock and I went out to speak with her. The news was bad: in my absence Fine and Reshevsky had convinced Maurice Wertheim, captain of the American team, that they should play on the top two boards in the forthcoming match with the USSR team. But as USA Champion I had the full right to lead the team! Reflecting on the injustice of this treacherous decision, I completely lost my head. And my blunder in the game with Euwe is perfectly explicable.'

48 ♗d8 c2??

Denker attaches as many as three question marks to this move and writes: '48...♕b1+! 49 ♔h2 ♕a2+ and ...♕f7 would have won.' Let us check: 50 ♔g1 (not 50 ♔g3? ♕f7 51 ♗b6 c2 52 ♕c8 ♘e4+ or 51 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 52 e8♕+ ♘xe8 53 ♗xg5 ♔e6 and wins) 50...♕f7 51 ♗b6! c2! (the only move) 52 ♕c8! (also the only move) 52...d3 53 ♕f5+ ♔g7 54 ♗e3! ♕xe7 (54...h6!?) 55 ♕xd3 h6! (55...♕e5 56 ♗xg5! ♕xg5 57 ♕xc2 is less clear) 56 ♔f1 (56 ♔f2?! ♕c7 57 ♗c1 ♕h2+ 58 ♔e1 ♕g1+ 59 ♕f1 ♕d4 60 ♕e2 ♕c3+) 56...♕c7 57 ♗c1 ♕c6 58 ♔e1, and the win for Black is nevertheless not so simple as after 47...♕b1+! If, say, 58...♕h1+ 59 ♕f1 ♕xf1+?! 60 ♔xf1 ♘d5 61 ♔e2 ♘f4+ 62 ♔d2 ♘xh3 there is the pretty 63 ♗b2+ (but not 63 ♔xc2? ♘f2 and wins) 63...♔f7 64 ♗d4! with a draw.

Euwe and Kmoch also gave 48...♕e3+ 49 ♔g2 c2 50 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 51 e8♕+ ♔g7 52 ♕d7+ ♔f8 53 ♗e7+?! ♕xe7 54 ♕c8+ ♔g7 55 ♕xc2 and White has a difficult position, but the computer finds a draw immediately: 53 ♕f5+! ♔e8 54 ♗xg5.



49 ♕xf6+! ♔xf6 50 e8♕+ ♔g7 51 ♕xe4 c1♕+ 52 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 1-0

Despite the mistakes, this was a highly interesting game, which reveals Euwe's outlook on chess.

'I was so demoralised by this defeat, that I then gained only 2½ points out of 8,' writes Denker in his article 'The man who defeated Alekhine.' 'To Euwe's credit, he was as distressed as I was by the outcome of our game – especially because a few moves before my oversight he had offered a draw. As for the Soviet participants, they were dumbfounded by my defeat, no doubt attributing it to the same motives that influenced the results of key games between themselves...'

'Distressed' though he was, Euwe gained a further four wins in a row – over Boleslavsky, O'Kelly, Bernstein and Vidmar. And since the tired Botvinnik only just escaped with a draw against Flohr, and then unexpected lost to Kotov and Yanofsky, the Dutchman burst ahead by a whole point – 12½ out of 15!

But here it was Euwe who become tired (three draws), whereas Botvinnik gained a second wind: he scored 3 out of 3 and by the last round had overtaken his rival by half a point. At the finish he had to play Black with the jovial Najdorf, who publicly promised to win this game... And he won! Alas, Euwe did not find in himself the strength to gain at least a draw with Kotov. He thus remained second, 1½ points ahead of Smyslov and 2½ ahead of Najdorf and Szabo (the scores of the tournament are given on p.159).

Nevertheless, the Dutch Champion quite reasonably regarded Groningen 1946 as the best tournament in his career. With such play it was still possible to lay claim to the title, but... 'In contrast to other world champions, Euwe was exceptionally objective and by no means a formalist,' writes grandmaster Averbakh. 'Otherwise he would undoubtedly have insisted that after Alekhine's death the title of champion should be returned to him. After all, the FIDE Congress (1947) did in fact do this, but it then revoked this decision on the demands of the Soviet delegation and decided to hold the match-tournament. Euwe did not even protest, although such a tournament was not in his interests, and before that it had been possible to win the chess crown only in a match...'

Soon his playing strength declined and in the 1948 FIDE match-tournament he finished last. The Botvinnik era had arrived.... The turbulent events associated with the struggle for the chess crown at that time will be described in the chapters on the sixth and seventh world champions.

Farewell to Arms

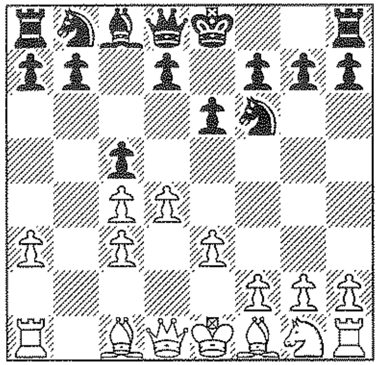
From the autumn of 1948 Euwe concentrated on his teaching work and only occasionally played in the Dutch Championship, small international tournaments and team competitions. No one was surprised when he missed the Candidates tournament in Budapest 1950. But his appearance in the list of participants in the historic Candidates tournament in Zürich 1953 caused a genuine sensation: was the 52-year-old ex-champion really capable of resisting the young in the double-round event of the 15 best grandmasters in the world?

However, Euwe's play in the first cycle was most praiseworthy. It was not just that for a long time he was right behind the leaders – he also won two wonderful games, against Geller and Najdorf, each of which was awarded a brilliancy prize! Both are brilliantly annotated by David Bronstein in his book on the tournament.

In the first round Euwe defeated Kotov, then in the second Geller began a strong attack on the Dutchman's king, sacrificing his c4-pawn. 'Geller would have had every chance of success, if by tradition Black had counterattacked on the queenside,' writes Bronstein. 'But Euwe carried out two remarkable ideas: 1) he exploited the communications of the queenside for an attack on the kingside; 2) he lured the opponent's forces deep into his rear with the aim of diverting them from the defence of their king. It is extremely interesting to follow how the white pieces penetrated further and further in their direct attack on the king and finally reached a point from which there was no return, whereas in this time Black made an outflanking movement with his forces.'

Game 28
Y.Geller-M.Euwe
Candidates Tournament,
Zürich 1953, 2nd round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E28

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 a3 (5 ♗d3 – *Game No.58*) **5...♗xc3+ 6 bxc3**



The Sämisch Variation, an aggressive way of combating the Nimzo-Indian Defence, was popular at that time.

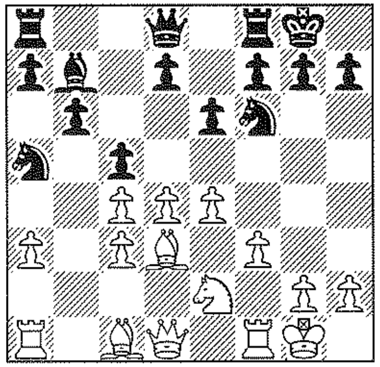
6...b6!? (6...0-0 7 ♗d3 ♘c6 – *Game No.91*) **7 ♗d3** (7 ♘e2!? – *Game No.92*) **7...♗b7 8 f3**

'A small but significant opening subtlety: as a result of the transposition of moves (...b7-b6 and ...♗b7 instead of the usual ...0-0 and ...♘c6) White, who has not managed to react in time with the correct 7 ♘e2, is forced to spend an extra tempo on the preparation of e3-e4.' (Bronstein)

8...♘c6 9 ♘e2 0-0 10 0-0

10 e4 ♘e8! (10...♘a5?! 11 ♗g5!) 11 0-0 ♖c8 or 11...♘a5 has also been played, transposing into a position from the present game.

10...♘a5 11 e4



11...♘e8!

'Capablanca's prophylactic manoeuvre. The inclusion of the moves f2-f3 and ...♗b7 is definitely to the advantage of Black, since he can quickly begin a siege of the c4-pawn, whereas for White it is more difficult to attack on the kingside, since his queen is cut off from the g4- and h5-squares.' (Taimanov)

12 ♘g3!

'Black withdrew his knight, in order to prevent the pin ♗g5 and to answer f3-f4 with ...f7-f5, blocking the kingside (*for example, 12 ♗e3?! d6 13 ♘g3 ♕d7 14 f4 f5! – G.K.*). Therefore, before advancing his f-pawn, White takes control of the f5-square. Defending the c4-pawn is pointless: it was already doomed after White's fifth move.' (Bronstein)

12...cxd4 (12...♗a6!?) **13 cxd4 ♖c8 14 f4**

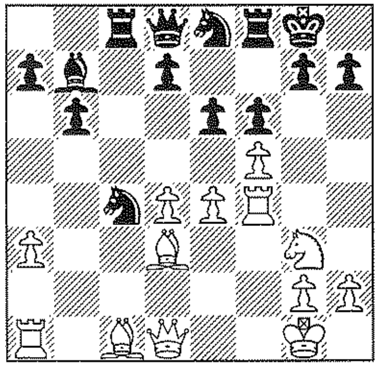
It was far quieter to play 14 c5 bxc5 15 dxc5 ♖xc5 16 ♗e3 and then ♗xa7, but Geller did not venture all this just for a draw.

14...♘xc4 15 f5 (with the threat of 16 f6! ♘xf6 17 ♗g5) **15...f6**

'Another option was 15...exf5, but it is rather unlikely that Black would survive 16 ♘xf5 ♘cd6 17 ♘g3 (17...f6 18 e5).' (Euwe) Interesting was 15...b5!? (Burgess; the idea is 16 f6 ♘xf6 17 ♗g5 ♕b6!) 16 e5!? (Crouch).

16 ♖f4?!

A seemingly logical continuation of the attack: the rook is aiming for h4. But it was better to play 16 a4 e5 (16...♗a6?! 17 ♗a3!) 17 ♗xc4+ (17 d5!?) 17...♖xc4 18 dxe5 fxe5 19 ♕b3 with compensation for the pawn (Polugayevsky-Averbakh, 23rd USSR Championship, Leningrad 1956).



At first sight White's initiative more than compensates for the sacrificed pawn. Bronstein writes that he 'needs only two moves to switch his queen and rook to the h-file, after which it would appear that nothing will save the black king.'

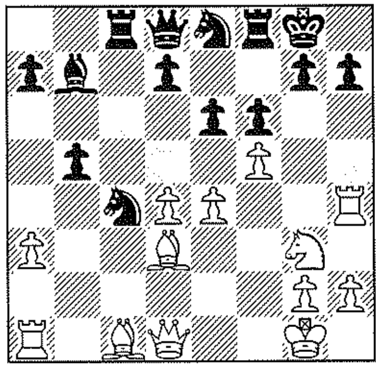
For example, after 16...e5?! 17 ♖h4! exd4 18 ♕h5 ♘e5 (18...h6 19 ♗xh6 also does not help) 19 ♕xh7+ 'Black must be prepared for the very worst.' (Euwe) But how can the creation of the ♖h4 and ♕h5 battery be prevented? Is it possible that Black's deep strategy was incorrect?!

16...b5!!

'The start of a remarkable counterattacking plan, the basis of which is Black's advantage on the central squares.' (Bronstein) Such quiet moves are more beautiful than any sacrifices! A path is simply opened for the queen to b6, and the weakness of White's d4-pawn and of the g1-a7 diagonal immediately makes itself felt.

17 ♖h4

'17 ♕h5? ♕b6! 18 ♘e2 ♘e5 would have led to an echo-variation: White would not manage to play ♖h4.' (Bronstein) And after 17 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♖h4 ♕c7! 19 ♗e3 ♖c2 with the threat of ...♕c3 Black also has dangerous counterplay (analysis by Botvinnik and Abramov).

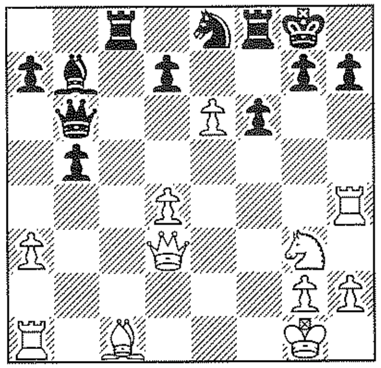


17...♕b6! (tying the white queen to the d4-pawn) **18 e5!**

An excellent defensive-attacking reply: White takes the h7-pawn by force!

18...♘xe5 (according to Euwe, 'one of the points of Black's defence') **19 fxe6 ♘xd3 20 ♕xd3**

20 exd7? will not do because of 20...♕c6 or 20...♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♘xc1 22 dxe8♕ ♖xe8 23 ♕xc1 ♕e6 and wins.



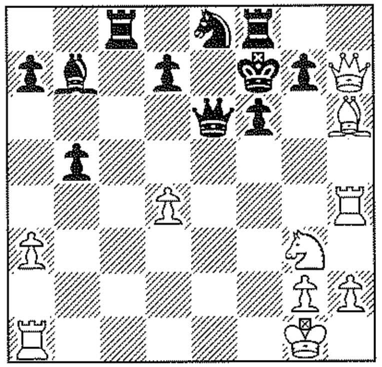
20...♕xe6!

'Another difficult decision. 20...g6 looked better, as 21 exd7 is met by 21...♕c6 (threatening mate), and 22...♕xd7. But White plays 21 ♗h6 ♘g7 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7, followed by the surprising 23 ♘f5+! gxf5 (or 23...♔h8 24 ♘e7! *or 24 ♕h3 b5 25 ♖xb5+! – G.K.*) 24 ♕xf5 ♖h8 25 ♖g4+ ♔f8 26 ♕xf6+ etc.' (Euwe)

21 ♕xh7+

'And so, for a small price White has nevertheless broken through. Black's position again appears critical.' (Bronstein)

21...♔f7 22 ♗h6



White increases the pressure. After the weaker 22 ♕h5+? g6 23 ♕h7+ (23 ♕xb5? ♖xc1+! 24 ♖xc1 ♕e3+; 23 ♕d1?! ♕d5!) 23...♘g7 24 ♗h6 ♖g8 the attack peters out and Black launches a counter-offensive with ...♖c2!

22...♖h8?!!

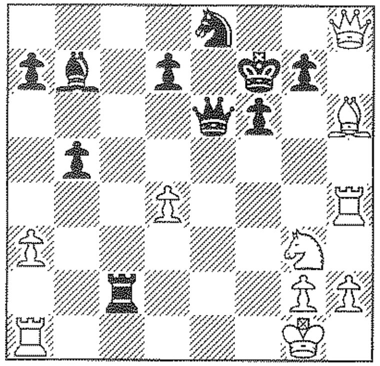
A surprise! 'The principle of the aggressive defence is pushed to its limits. The strength of the text move lies mainly in the fact that it makes c2 available to the rook, while the white queen is sidelined. Black could also have continued normally with 22...♕d5 (or 22...♕c6 23 ♘e4) 23 ♖e4, but both continuations leave White with dangerous counter-threats.' (Euwe) However, the computer continues 23...♖c6! 24 ♖ae1 ♖e6, evaluating the position in Black's favour. Also not without its point is 22...♖c4!? (Bronstein), or 22...♖c3!? (Plisetsky), or even 22...b4!? (Crouch) with the idea of 23 axb4? ♖h8!! 24 ♕xh8 ♖c2 25 d5 ♗xd5 26 ♖d1 ♖xg2+ 27 ♔f1 ♕a6+ 28 ♔e1 ♖g1+ 29 ♔f2 (29 ♔d2 ♕a2+) 29...♖xd1 30 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 31 ♖h7 ♕b6+ 32 ♔e2 ♗f3+! and mate in 10 moves; it is therefore better to play 23 ♖f1! bxa3! (if 23...♖h8 24 ♕xh8 ♖c2 there is now 25 ♖xf6+! ♔xf6 26 ♗g5+! ♔xg5 27 ♖h5+ with a draw).

The two exclamation marks to the move in the game were attached by me for the beauty of the idea: an unusual tactical solution – a wonderful diverting rook sacrifice! Black attacks the enemy king with queen, rook and bishop, and his lone knight copes with the defence of his own monarch. But, alas, I also had to attach a question mark: in the resulting wild complications Black risked squandering virtually his entire advantage.

Even so, I am at one with Bronstein's conclusion: 'Although analysts have shown that 22...♖h8 was a premature idea, chess fans will find it hard to agree with this: such moves are not forgotten!'

23 ♕xh8 ♖c2!

Creating the threat of 24...♖xg2+ 25 ♔f1 ♕c4+ with a rapid mate.



24 ♖c1?

The fatal error. Geller defends the c4-square in the event of 24...♖xg2+ 25 ♔f1, but the black queen finds another route for the final rendezvous with the white king!

The only way to dispute Black's fantastic combination was by 24 d5!, disrupting the harmonious coordination of the opponent's forces:

1) 24...♗xd5! (but not 24...♕xd5? 25 ♖e4) 25 ♖d1! (the only way!) 25...♖xg2+ (25...♕b6+ 26 ♖hd4) 26 ♔f1 gxh6 (26...♖a2?! 27 ♗d2) and now:

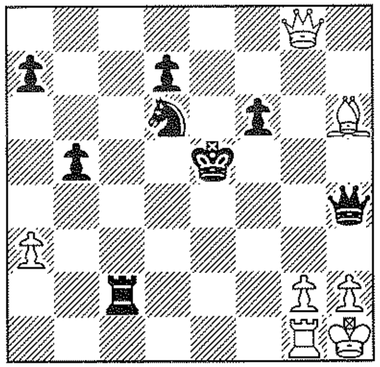
a) 27 ♖xh6? ♖xg3! 28 hxg3 (28 ♖h7+ ♖g7) 28...♗c4+ 29 ♔g2 (or 29 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 30 ♔h1 ♕f3+ 31 ♔h2 ♕e2+) 29...♕e2+ 30 ♔h3 ♗e6+ 31 g4 ♕xg4+ 32 ♔h2 ♕xd1 33 ♖h7+ ♔g6 34 ♖h6+ ♔g5 wins for Black.

b) 27 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 28 ♖e4 ♘g7! 29 ♔xg2 f5 (30 ♘xf5 ♕xe4+), 'recapturing the sacrificed material advantageously' (Euwe), although, in my opinion, after 30 ♕xh6 fxe4 31 ♕f4+ and ♘xe4 the win is still problematic for Black;

c) 27 ♕xh6 (this is generally held to be the best move) 27...♘g7, 'and Black, with two pawns for the exchange, has slightly better chances' (Euwe), or even 'good winning chances' (Bronstein). But in my view, after 28 ♖hd4! ♗c6 29 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 30 ♔xg2 ♗c6+ (30...♕c6+ 31 ♔f2) 31 ♔g1 ♕a2 32 ♕d2 ♕xa3 33 ♖c1 White is completely alright. 27...♗f3! is better, but even here after 28 ♖d2

♕c6 (or 28...♖xd2 29 ♕xd2) 29 ♖xg2 ♗xg2+ 30 ♔g1 the outcome is unclear.

2) 24...♕b6+ (*? – G.K.*) 25 ♔h1 ♕f2 26 ♖g1 ♗xd5, after which the analysts found 27 ♖e4! ♗xe4 28 ♘xe4 ♕h4 29 ♘d6+! (but not 29 ♘xf6? ♕xf6 with an extra pawn, or 29 ♗xg7? ♕xe4 30 ♕f8+ ♔g6 31 ♗h6 d5 with an obvious advantage to Black) 29...♘xd6 30 ♕xg7+ ♔e6 31 ♕g8+ ♔e5.



Analysis diagram

Here Euwe concludes his analysis with the uncommonly optimistic line 32 ♗e3? ♖c8! 33 ♕g6? ♘f5!, 'and Black can already go for mate (34 ♗xa7 ♕xh2+! or 34 ♗d2 ♘g3+!).'

But, evidently, not without reason did Fischer once say about Euwe: 'He is so correct, that there must be at least something incorrect in him!' The black king is too exposed, and after 32 ♖d1! it is not Black who wins but White: 32...♕e4 33 ♗e3!! ♖c3 (or 33...♕xe3 34 ♕d5+ ♔f4 35 g3+ ♔g4 36 ♖d4+) 34 ♗f2! ♖xa3 (34...♖d3 35 ♖e1) 35 ♗g3+ ♖xg3 36 ♕xg3+ ♔f5 (36...♕f4 37 ♖d5+) 37 ♖f1+ ♔e6 38 ♖e1.

Even stronger is the unexpected 33 ♗e3!!, for example: 33...♕xe3? 34 ♕d5+ ♔f4 35 g3+ ♔g4 36 ♖d4+, or 33...♖c3 (33...♖c6 34 ♗f2!) 34 ♗f2! ♖xa3 35 ♗g3+ ♖xg3 36 ♕xg3+ ♔f5 (36...♕f4 37 ♖d5+) 37 ♖f1+ ♔e6 38 ♖e1 and Black will not survive.

24...♖xg2+ 25 ♔f1 ♕b3! (with the threat of ...♕d3+ or ...♕f3+) **26 ♔e1 ♕f3 0-1**

27 ♖f4 ♕e3+ and mate. A classic example of active defence combined with counterattack.

'In this tournament Euwe played no worse than the others, but, I would say, it was more difficult for him,' recalls Taimanov. 'However, he won against me, even though I was twice as young. The variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence was one that Flohr and I had analysed, as it seemed to us, exhaustively, but Euwe refuted this analysis, winning an important theoretical dispute.' This was in the eighth round: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕c7 11 ♗a2 e5 12 ♕c2** (12 h3!) **12...♗g4! 13 d5?! ♘e7 14 c4 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♕d7! 16 ♗b1 ♘g6 17 ♕f5 ♕xf5 18 ♗xf5 ♘h4 19 ♗e4 ♘xe4 20 fxe4 f5!** etc.

And in the ninth round an enormous impression was created by Euwe's game with one of the leaders, the hitherto undefeated Najdorf. In his introduction to it Bronstein writes:

'Sometimes positions arise that cannot be evaluated on the basis of general principles, such as pawn weaknesses, open lines, better development etc., since the equilibrium has been disturbed on many parts of the board and it is impossible to draw up an exact balance. The attempt to calculate variations is also not always successful. It is then that one is aided by intuition and imagination, which have provided chess with its most beautiful combinations and enabled chess players to experience the joy of creativity. It is not true to say that intuitive games were played only in the times of Morphy, Anderssen and Chigorin, and that now everything is based on positional principles and dry calculation. I am convinced that, even in the games that received brilliancy prizes in the present tournament, not all the variations were calculated to the end. Intuition was and remains one of the foundations of chess creativity.'

Game 29

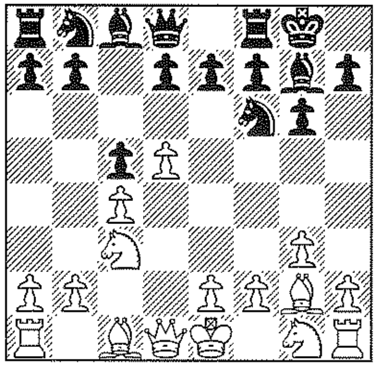
M.Euwe-M.Najdorf

Candidates Tournament,
Zürich 1953, 9th round
King's Indian Defence E61

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3

After 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 Najdorf drew with Bronstein in the second round and scored a fine win over Taimanov in the fourth round. The experienced Euwe, who himself played the King's Indian back in Pistyan 1922 against Tarrasch and Grünfeld, goes a different way.

3...♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♘c3 c5 6 d5



6...e5!?

'A surprising move, with which Black tries to benefit in comparison with the well-known variation 5...d6 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e5 (*7...♘a6 8 0-0 ♘c7 9 e4 a6 10 a4 ♖b8 11 ♖e1 b5 Averbakh-Najdorf, 7th round*), where little is promised by 8 0-0, but 8 dxe6 ♗xe6 9 ♘g5 is possible (*although after 9...♗xc4 10 ♗xb7 ♘bd7 11 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 12 0-0 d5 Black has quite good compensation for the exchange – G.K.*). But now White does not have the moral right to play 7 dxe6 in view of 7...dxe6.' (Euwe)

7 ♗g5!?

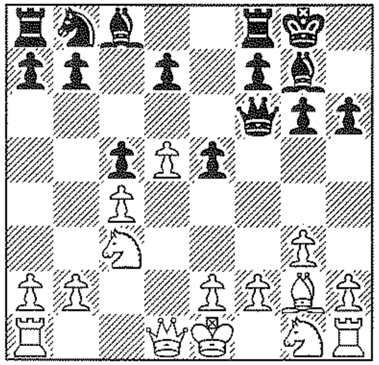
Nevertheless, there later occurred 7 dxe6 fxe6 (after 7...dxe6 8 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 9 ♗e3 ♘a6 10 ♘f3 White has somewhat the better endgame) 8 ♗f4 ♘e8 9 ♕d2 ♘c6 10 h4 with the initiative (Korchnoi-Hartoch, Amsterdam 1972).

With the move in the game White tries to divert his opponent from the customary 7 e4 d6 8 ♘ge2 a6 9 a4 ♘bd7 (Reshevsky-Najdorf, America 12th matchgame 1952), or 7 ♘h3 d6 8 0-0 ♘bd7 (Guimard-Najdorf, Havana 1952). Also unclear is 7 ♘f3 d6 8 0-0 ♘bd7 (Boleslavsky-Najdorf, 25th round).

7...h6?!

'An aggressive treatment of the opening. If 7...d6 White will play 8 ♕d2, then ♗h6, and without more ado will advance his h-pawn. This threat is dangerous, but by no means deadly, so that 7...d6 was of course logical.' (Bronstein)

8 ♗xf6 ♕xf6



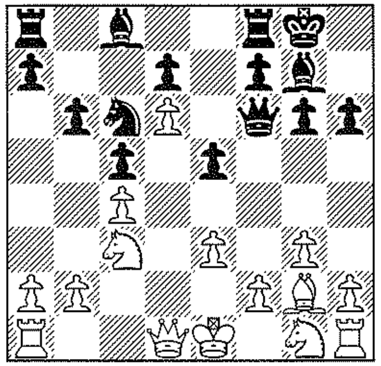
9 d6!

Bold and determined play! 'The advance of the pawn involves two strategic ideas – to delay the development of Black's queenside and to cut the communications between his flanks. In addition, White gains the valuable d5-square for his bishop and knight. There is only one drawback to the d5-d6 advance: the pawn, cut off from base, may be lost. Therefore White's task is, while the d6-pawn is still alive, to make a swift attack on the opponent's kingside that is deprived of the necessary support of the queenside pieces. Euwe copes brilliantly with this task.' (Bronstein)

Euwe's commentary is also very interesting: 'It is true that it takes courage to sacrifice a pawn, a piece or even a rook, without clear and demonstrable compensation. But in many cases this courage is to some extent born out of necessity. The player has opted for a risky set-up and now has to accept the consequences, as backtracking can only lead to a worse position... Black has the bishop pair and can now get an excellent position with ...d7-d6 and ...♕e7 possibly followed by ...f7-f5. The reader will understand that there is only one solution to the positional problem here: give him hell!'

9...♘c6 10 e3 (not allowing the move ...♘d4) **10...b6**

Later the Dutch ex-champion decided to test this position with Black: 10...♔h8 (10...♖e8!?) 11 ♘ge2 b6 12 0-0 ♗b7 13 ♕a4 ♕xd6 14 ♖ad1 ♕e6 15 ♘b5 ♖ad8 16 ♘ec3 with double-edged play (de Jong-Euwe, Holland match 1954).



11 ♗d5!

There is no way back – all White's hopes lie in a swift attack! 'Maybe because I was secretly afraid of eventually losing the piece spearheading my attack, I went a step further with my 11th move, and then there was no stopping. The first point of the text move is that d6 remains indirectly covered (11...♕xd6? 12 ♗xf7+), and also that it will now certainly be followed by 12 ♘e4, and the black queen is permanently chased away. And the third point of White's move is that the white knight can jump to g5 via e4 in order to support a kingside attack together with ♗d5.' (Euwe)

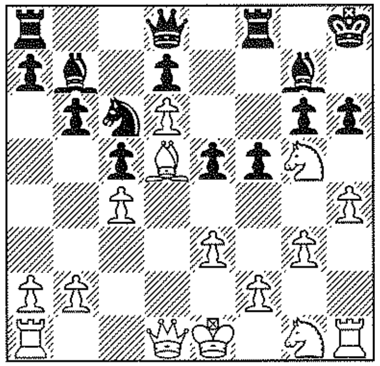
11...♔h8

'Preparing ...f7-f5. Later Najdorf suggested another plan: 11...♗a6, ...♖b8 and ...b6-b5. However, it seems to me that in this case the attack on the king would have developed more quickly and would have been more dangerous.' (Bronstein)

12 ♘e4 ♕d8 (but not 12...♕f5? 13 g4!) **13 h4!** (creating a springboard for the knight to leap to g5) **13...f5 14 ♘g5**

An elegant move!

14...♗b7!



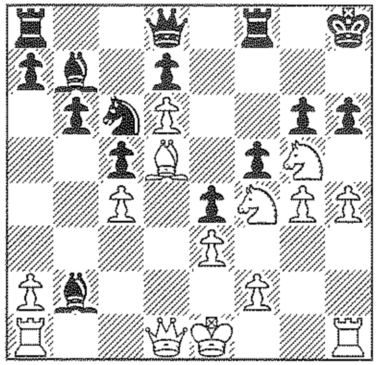
15 g4!

In such positions the exchange does not count! 'Euwe continues methodically clearing the approaches to the king.' (Bronstein) In the event of 15 ♘f7+? ♖xf7 16 ♗xf7 ♘b4 17 ♖h2 ♕f6 18 ♗d5 ♗xd5 19 cxd5 e4 Black launches a counterattack.

15...e4

In order to move the bishop from g7, play the king there and create the threat of ...hxg5. According to Euwe, this is a dubious move, since Black loses control of the f4-square. But what can be suggested instead? If 15...♘a5 there follows 16 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 17 ♕d5 with the threats of ♕xb7 and ♘f7+, while if 15...♕f6, then 16 ♘f7+ winning the exchange: 16...♖xf7 17 g5! ♕xd6 18 ♗xf7. All that perhaps remains is 15...♕e8!?

16 ♘e2 (the knight lends its assistance!) **16...♗xb2 17 ♘f4!**



An ideal outpost for the knight. 'White in turn sacrifices the exchange. But should Black take the rook? It is not possible to answer this question with variations. White has just too many tempting continuations of the attack, which in a practical game, in my view, cannot be parried. Najdorf was evidently of the same opinion, and in the first instance he defended the key g6-point.' (Bronstein)

17...♕f6

Both defence and attack – what could be more natural? It is dangerous to play 17...hxg5?! 18 ♘xg6+ ♔g7 19 ♘xf8 ♕xf8 20 hxg5, but it must be investigated why 17...♗xa1? is bad. Thus after 18 ♕xa1? ♕f6 19 ♕xf6+ (19 ♘xg6+ ♔g7 20 ♕xf6+ ♖xf6) 19...♖xf6 20 h5 ♔g7 21 hxg6 fxg4 the attack comes to an end and the limit of White's dreams is a draw.

However, 18 ♘xg6+ ♔g7 19 gxf5! ♗c3+ 20 ♔f1 is much stronger. A computer analysis of this mind-boggling position shows that Euwe's intuition did not let him down – White's attack more than compensates for the lost material:

1) 20...hxg5 21 ♕h5! ♕e8! 22 ♕xg5! (but not 22 hxg5 ♖h8 23 f6+ ♗xf6 24 gxf6+ ♔xf6 25 ♘xh8 ♕xh5 26 ♖xh5 ♘a5! and the endgame favours Black) 22...♗f6 23 ♕g4 ♖h8 24 ♖g1!! (this is better than 24 ♘e5+ ♔f8! – 24...♔h7? 25 ♘xd7! ♗c3 26 f6 and mate – 25 ♖g1! ♘e7!! 26 dxe7+ ♔xe7 27 ♘g6+ ♔d8 28 ♗xb7 ♖b8 29 ♗xe4 ♖h7 30 ♕f4 ♔c8 31 ♗d5) 24...♔h6 25 ♘xh8 ♘e5 26 ♘f7+! ♕xf7 27 ♕f4+ ♔h7 28 ♗xf7 ♘xf7 29 ♕g4 winning;

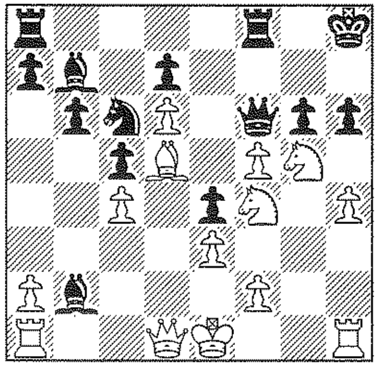
2) 20...♖xf5 21 ♘xe4 ♖xd5 (21...♔xg6 22 ♕g4+) 22 ♕xd5 and now:

a) 22...♕g8 (22...♔xg6 23 ♖g1+ ♔h7 24 ♕d3!! and mates) 23 ♕d3! ♗f6 24 ♖g1 ♘b4 25 ♕e2! ♗xe4 26 ♘e7+ ♔h8 (26...♔f7 27 ♕h5+) 27 ♖xg8+ ♖xg8 28 ♘xg8 ♗d3 (28...♔xg8 29 ♕g4+) 29 ♘xf6 wins for White;

b) 22...♘a5 23 ♕f5 ♗xe4 24 ♕xe4 ♘xc4 (or 24...♕e8 25 ♘e7 ♔h8 26 ♖g1 ♗g7 27 ♘g6+ ♔g8 28 ♕g2! ♔h7 29 ♘e7 ♗c3 30 ♕e4+ ♔h8 31 ♘g6+ ♔g8 32 ♘f8+! ♕xf8 33 ♕h7 ♕f7 34 ♖g8+ ♕xg8 35 ♕e7 mate) 25 ♕xc4 ♔xg6 26 ♖g1+ ♔f5 27 ♕d5+ ♗e5 28 e4+ ♔f4 (28...♔f6 29 f4!) 29 ♔e2! (with the threat of 30 ♕d2+ ♔xe4 31 ♕d3+ ♔f4 32 ♕f3 mate) 29...c4 30 f3! and there is no defence against mate by ♕d2 or ♖g4.

18 gxf5!

An important moment in the battle.



18...♗xa1

'Maybe a little bit too greedy, but after, for example, 18...gxf5 19 ♖b1 ♗e5 20 ♘h5 ♕g6 21 ♖g1 hxg5 22 ♖xg5 ♕e8 (*? – G.K.*) 23 ♘g7! there are plenty of thunderclouds as well.' (Euwe) However, after 22...♕h7! 23 ♘f4 ♖f6 White's hopes are dashed.

Bronstein is not much closer to the truth: 'Since in any case White breaks through to one of the important squares – g6, h6 or h5, Najdorf nevertheless decides to take the rook, in order later to have the possibility of giving up his queen for two pieces or for a piece and a pawn. If 18...gxf5 there would have followed 19 ♖b1 ♗e5 20 ♕h5 with a very strong attack.' However, whether the attack will be successful after 20...♗xf4! 21 exf4 ♘d8 is not clear, and White is material down...

But why waste a tempo on 19 ♖b1? Much stronger, in my opinion, is 19 ♕h5!, signalling the start of the concluding assault: 19...♗xa1 20 ♘g6+ ♔g7 21 ♖g1 ♕c3+ (21...hxg5 22 ♖xg5) 22 ♔f1 ♖f6 23 ♘f4 ♕c1+ 24 ♔g2 ♕b2 (24...♕c2 25 ♘xe4 fxe4 26 ♔h1+ ♔h8 27 ♘g6+ ♔h7 28 ♕g4 wins for White) 25 ♘f7! (but not 25 ♔h1? ♕xf2! 26 ♘xe4+ ♕xg1+ 27 ♔xg1 fxe4 28 ♕g4+ ♔h8 29 ♕xd7 ♖b8 30 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 31 ♕xc6 ♗e5!) 25...♘e5 26 ♘xe5 (26 ♔h1+? ♘g4). There can follow:

1) 26...♗xd5 27 ♔h1+ ♔h8 (or 27...♔h7 28 ♖g6! ♖xg6 29 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 30 ♘xd5 ♕xe5 31 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 32 ♘e7+ ♔f7 33 ♕g6+ ♔f8 34 ♕g8 mate) 28 ♘eg6+ ♔h7 29 ♘xd5 ♖g8 (29...♕xf2 30 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 31 ♘f8+! ♖xf8 32 ♕g6+ ♔h8 33 ♕xh6 mate) 30 ♘ge7!! ♖xg1+ 31 ♔xg1 and ♕e8 with crushing threats;

2) 26...♕xe5 27 ♔f1+! ♔h7 28 ♖g6 ♕xf4 29 ♖xf6! ♗xd5 30 ♕g6+ ♔h8 31 exf4 ♗xc4+ 32 ♔e1 ♗c3+ 33 ♔d1 ♗xf6 34 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 35 ♕g6+ ♔h8 36 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 37 ♕g6+ ♔h8 38 ♕xf5, or 35...♔f8 36 ♕xf5+ ♗f7 37 ♕xd7 and the queen and pawns overpower the rook and bishop.

But this is nothing compared with what is to come! 'The next stage of the game resembles the ancient clashes between the masters of the Italian School.' (Bronstein)

19 ♘xg6+ ♔g7 20 ♘xe4?!

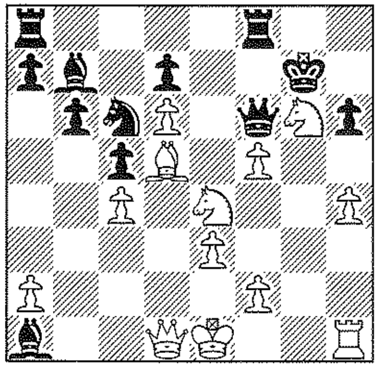
'As though acknowledging that the entire attack is being conducted intuitively, rather than by calculation. Otherwise, why did White need the e4-pawn?' writes Bronstein (while Euwe does not make any comment on this move). 'Far more attractive was the simple 20 ♘f4, preparing the ground for ♘h5+, ♕h5 and ♖g1. However, Euwe did not want to allow his opponent any freedom of choice. 20 ♘xe4 forces the play, depriving the black queen of the c3-square and eliminating the variation 20 ♘f4 ♕c3+ 21 ♔f1, although, in my view, this would only improve things for White. For example: 21...♖xf5 22 ♕g4 or 21...hxg5 22 hxg5 ♖xf5 23 ♖h7+. But... Euwe was awarded a brilliancy prize for this game, the judges were not excessively strict, and we too will not be over-particular. Every grandmaster has his style, his virtues and deficiencies...'

The computer supports the recommendation 20 ♘f4!, adding the following variations:

1) 20...♕b2 21 ♕g4! ♕c1+ 22 ♔e2 ♕b2+ 23 ♔f1 and Black has no defence; a more complicated variation is 21 ♘xe4 ♔h7 22 ♘g5+ ♔h8 23 ♕h5 ♕b1+ 24 ♔e2 ♕xa2+ 25 ♔f1 ♖f6 26 ♘f7+ (26 ♘e4?! ♖g8) 26...♔h7 27 ♘g6! ♖xf7 (27...♕b1+ 28 ♔g2) 28 ♘f8+!!;

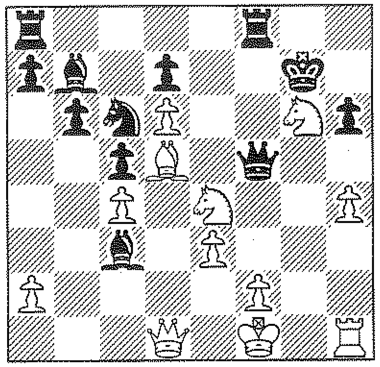
2) 20...♗c3+ 21 ♔f1 ♕xf5 22 ♖g1 ♘a5 (neither 22...hxg5 23 ♕h5 nor 22...♗a6 23 ♘xe4+ ♔h8 24 ♘xc3 is any help) 23 ♘xe4+ ♔h8 24 ♕c2 ♗e5 25 ♘g6+ ♔h7 26 ♘e7 ♗xd5 27 cxd5 ♕h3+ 28 ♔e1 and wins;

3) 20...♔h8 21 ♕h5 ♘e5 22 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 23 ♗xe4 ♗c3+ 24 ♔f1 and Black can lay down his arms.



20...♗c3+ (but not immediately 20...♕xf5? because of 21 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 22 ♖g1! ♗g7 23 ♖g3! etc.) **21 ♔f1 ♕xf5**

It would appear that Black has avoided the worst: he has an enormous material advantage and quite active pieces...



22 ♘f4!!

A quiet move, which changes the entire picture: how can Black now save his bishop at c3? 'Had White wished to force a draw, he could have played 22 ♖g1 ♕h3+ 23 ♖g2 ♕h1+ 24 ♖g1 etc.' (Bronstein)

22...♔h8!

Here there is no time to think about the bishop – Black's royal couple is in mortal danger! For example: 22...♗e5? 23 ♘g3! ♕h7 (23...♕f6 24 ♘gh5+) 24 ♕g4+ ♔h8 25 ♘g6+, or 22...♗f6? 23 ♘g3 ♕e5 (23...♕h7 24 ♕g4+) 24 ♘gh5+ ♔h8 25 ♘g6+ ♔h7 26 ♕b1!, while if 22...♕e5? White wins by both 23 ♕g4+ ♔h8 24 ♘g6+ and 23 ♖g1+ ♔h7 24 ♘g5+!

'Black needs to make one or two more good moves, in order to stabilise the position and remain a rook up. But it seems to me that he is bound to lose even with the best defence.' (Bronstein)

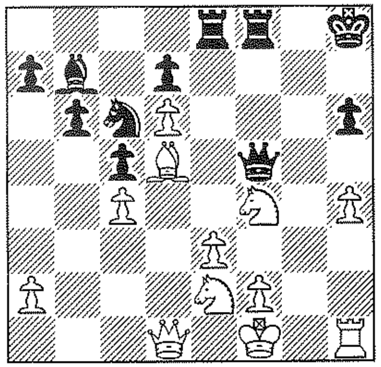
23 ♘xc3 (now Black has gained a slight respite) **23...♖ae8**

'Preventing the return of the white knight,' explains Euwe, but Bronstein is unhappy with this move and writes that Black did not make use of a good opportunity – 23...♘d8 ('the pressure of the bishop at d5 has long been intolerable') 24 ♗xb7 ♘xb7, although even here 'White's task is solved by the energetic 25 ♘cd5 – the d6-pawn need no longer be defended, it has done its work.'

But in my view, after 23...♘d8?! it is more accurate to play 24 ♖g1! ♔h7 25 ♘ce2!, for example: 25...♗xd5 26 cxd5 ♖g8 27 ♘g3 ♕f7 (27...♕f6 28 ♕b1+ ♔h8 29 ♘gh5) 28 ♕c2+ ♔h8 29 h5 ♖g5 30 ♘g6+ ♔g7 31 f4 and White wins.

24 ♘ce2!

Having described a complete circle, this daring steed returns to take part in the final attack.



24...♖g8?!

A desperate attempt to get rid of the mighty white bishop. 24...♘d8?! (or 24...♘a5?!), with the same idea, is also bad in view of 25 ♘g3 ♕f6 26 ♘gh5, driving the queen from its key outpost: 26...♕b2 (26...♕f5? 27 ♕a1+) 27 ♘g6+ ♔h7 28 ♘xf8+ ♖xf8 29 ♘f4 etc.

However, the computer suggests 24...♗a6!, creating the defensive resource ...♘c6-e5. For example: 25 ♖g1 (25 ♘g3 ♕f6) 25...♘e5! (this is better than 25...♖g8 26 ♕a1+ ♕e5 27 ♕b1! ♖xg1+ 28 ♔xg1 ♕xd6 29 ♘g6+ ♔g7 30 ♘ef4 with an attack) 26 ♕a1 (26 ♘g3? ♘xc4!, but there is 26 ♕b3 ♕f6 27 ♕c3) 26...♕f6 (26...♔h7?! 27 ♘g3 ♘xc4 28 ♘xf5 ♘xe3+ 29 ♔e1 ♘c2+ 30 ♔d2 ♘xa1 31 ♖g7+ ♔h8 32 ♘g6 mate) 27 ♕c3 ♔h7! (not 27...♕xd6? 28 ♘g6+ ♔h7 29 ♘xf8+ ♖xf8 30 ♕c2+ ♔h8 31 ♘f4 ♘xc4 32 ♔e1 ♘e5 33 ♘g6+ ♘xg6 34 ♖xg6; but 27...♖g8 28 ♗xg8 ♖xg8 29 ♖g6 ♖xg6 30 ♕xe5 ♔h7 31 ♘xg6 ♕xg6 32 ♕e7+ ♕g7 is less clear) 28 h5 ♔h8! 29 ♖g3 ♔h7 and no direct win for White is apparent.

'Najdorf lost the battle without having

made any demonstrable error,' writes Euwe, seeing the source of Black's defeat to be his handling of the opening. But it would appear that the move 24...♖g8?! must be deemed such an error.

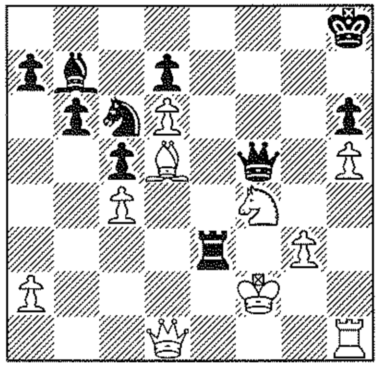
25 h5! ♖g5 26 ♘g3 ♖xg3

Alas, this is forced: 26...♕e5? 27 ♘g6+, 26...♕f6? 27 ♘e4, while if instead 26...♕g4 there is 27 ♗f3, and after any other queen move White has a wide choice of attacking possibilities.

27 fxg3 ♖xe3

Perhaps the lesser evil was a line not mentioned by the commentators: 27...♘a5!? 28 e4 ♖xe4 29 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 (29...♕xe4 30 ♖h4 ♕xc4+ 31 ♔g1) 30 ♖h2 ♘xc4 31 ♔g1 ♘e5 32 ♖f2, although here too Black's position is unenviable.

28 ♔f2



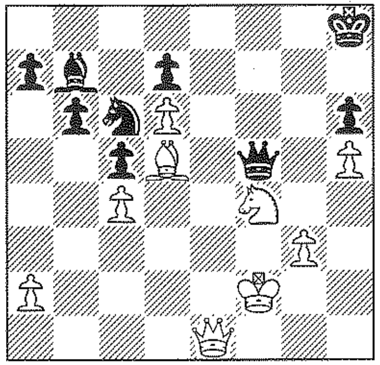
'For the moment it is not possible to give mate. Material is equal, but the bishop at b7 and knight at c6 are still making a modest contribution to the battle. This latter factor allows White to advance his forces in a new and decisive wave.' (Bronstein)

28...♖e8

Or 28...♖a3 29 ♕e2 ♔g7 30 ♕b2+ ♘d4 31 ♕xa3 ♕c2+ 32 ♔g1 ♗xd5 33 cxd5 ♕b1+ 34 ♔h2 ♕c2+ 35 ♘g2 ♕e2 36 ♖b1 ♕xh5+ 37 ♘h4 and White wins.

29 ♖e1 ♖xe1 (if 29...♖f8, then 30 ♕a1+! wins) **30 ♕xe1**

The black king's retinue has been reduced to the minimum, and unavoidable ruin awaits it.



30...♔g7

30...♘e5 is parried by 31 ♕xe5+! (it is never too late to make a terrible mistake: 31 ♗xb7?? ♘d3+) 31...♕xe5 32 ♘g6+.

31 ♕e8 ♕c2+ 32 ♔g1 ♕d1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕c2+ 34 ♘g2

This steed is also an excellent defender!

34...♕f5 35 ♕g8+ ♔f6 36 ♕h8+ ♔g5 37 ♕g7+ 1-0

The pursuit of the king concludes. A splendid intuitive attack – I think that Tal would not have been averse to putting his name to such a masterpiece!

Euwe ended the first cycle sharing 5th-7th places with Petrosian and Boleslavsky (7½ out of 14), but he no longer had sufficient energy for the second cycle. An eloquent picture: while his opponents were considering their moves, his wife was constantly massaging his head... After Zürich 1953 Euwe played extremely rarely and almost exclusively in team competitions, so these two fine games marked his farewell to big-time chess.

President

Only in 1956 did Dr Euwe give up teaching mathematics, on obtaining the post of scientific consultant in a computer firm. In 1964 he finally became a professor and later he called this (and not the winning of the crown in 1935!) the happiest event of his life: only then did genuine prosperity come to his modest house.

Of his chess appearances during that time I should mention his mini-match played on tour against the 13-year-old Bobby Fischer (New York 1957) which he won 1½-½. 'I think that he was very upset by his defeat,' recalled Euwe. 'Already then for him chess meant much more than it did for me.' Three years later Bobby gained full revenge on the veteran at the Olympiad in Leipzig...

In the winter of 1960/61 Euwe played an amusing demonstration game – by telephone – with the current world champion Mikhail Tal. The opening was a then fashionable variation of the Sicilian Defence, where White (Euwe), after sacrificing his queen, developed a powerful attack, and only with the aid of a spectacular counter-sacrifice was Black able to gain a draw by perpetual check.

The ex-world champion played an important role as leader of the Dutch team at the Olympiads and in the traditional matches with Germany. 'In the mid-1950s, when Euwe was analysing some position with three leading Dutch players, he rebuked Donner about something. The latter began trying to vindicate himself: 'But you also sometimes make mistakes.' To which Euwe commented: 'Yes, Hein, that is so, but you shouldn't forget that I understand chess better than the three of you put together...' (from an account by grandmaster Sosonko).

When in 1970 FIDE decided to stage the hitherto unprecedented 'match of the century' between teams from the USSR and the rest of the world, there was no more ideal candidate for the post of captain of the rest of the world than Dr Max Euwe! And six months later the current world champion Spassky, with the support of the Soviet delegation and a group of leading grandmasters (headed by Botvinnik), proposed the 69-year-old Euwe for the post of FIDE President. It need hardly be said that the legendary ex-champion was elected unanimously...

The eight years of his presidency came at a very difficult period in chess history, when the world hegemony of Soviet players was broken for the first time in a quarter of a century. The influence of the USSR and its satellites in FIDE was immense, and there were more than enough conflicts at the summit of chess! These were the Spassky-Fischer match (1972), the non-existent Fischer-Karpov match (1975), the final Candidates match Spassky-Korchnoi (1977/78) and the two Karpov-Korchnoi matches (1974 and especially 1978).

'Of course, during my match with Fischer,' Spassky recalls, 'Max indulged Fischer a little, but then I too indulged Fischer. Euwe tended to make compromises, especially when the Soviets dug their heels in, which often happened. During discussions about the Fischer-Karpov match, Max displayed his weakness. It was hardly right for him to disqualify Fischer, and with the Soviets he should have been firmer. It seems to me that he avenged himself a little on Fischer, not personally, but in general, for all his behaviour. It is very hard for a player to be President of such a large federation, masses of complicated problems arise, but Euwe, as President of FIDE, was of course at home in this post.'

Towards the end of 1974 Euwe arrived in Moscow for the last few games of the final Candidates match between Korchnoi and Karpov. Then Korchnoi, who was losing 0-3, suddenly scored two wins and the fate of the match hung by a thread. 'Those in the USSR who enjoyed a share of the cake at that time, wanted at any cost to ensure that the winner was Karpov. With this aim Euwe was invited to the Central Chess Club for discussions,' testifies the translator Lev Khariton. 'Despite incredible pressure, the President would not give in one iota to persuasion to change the rules of the match that was about to conclude. He was a pedant in the best sense of the word, in short – he was an honest man.'

And what about the scandal with the

Olympiad in Israel (Haifa 1976), to where the Soviet Union and the socialist countries refused to travel, instead setting up a counter-Olympiad in the Lebanon. However, Euwe insisted on implementing the decision of FIDE to hold the Olympiad in Israel! Moreover, he helped the 'No.1' challenger Korchnoi, who in the summer of 1976 defected from the USSR to the West. The infuriated Soviet authorities sent a letter to FIDE suggesting that the defector should be excluded from the forthcoming Candidates matches for the world championship! The letter was read out at the Congress in Haifa, but did not produce any effect. Subsequently Euwe put his name to letters in defence of Korchnoi's family. Naturally, Viktor Lvovich also remembers him as one of the last honest Presidents of FIDE...

Moscow was very unhappy with Euwe's behaviour. The President of the Sports Committee, S.Pavlov, wrote in a secret memorandum to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party: 'FIDE President M.Euwe systematically and fairly consistently ignores many suggestions by the socialist countries and carries out measures that indicate his pro-American and pro-Zionist orientation, and is not ashamed at times of taking decisions that infringe upon the lawful interests of Soviet players. This was particularly evident in the period of preparations for the world championship matches between the American grandmaster R.Fischer with the Soviet players B.Spassky and A.Karpov... M.Euwe's inability to manage FIDE's affairs is also seen in the solving of many other questions. Apparently his advanced age (75) is also having its effect. In view of this the USSR Sports Committee considers it advisable together with the other socialist countries to begin open discussions about selecting a candidate for the post of FIDE President (perhaps from Yugoslavia), in order in late 1976-early 1977 to demand publicly that M.Euwe should retire...'

However, some years later grandmaster Averbakh, a Vice-President of the Soviet Federation and an honorary member of FIDE, expressed a completely different point of view: 'Only a person with an innate sense of tact, fairness and tendency to seek compromises, such as Euwe was, was capable of controlling this international organisation... I remember how, in 1969, after losing the match for the world championship to Spassky, Petrosian received a telegram from Euwe: "Keep smiling!" and it later transpired that the same evening Spassky had received a telegram, a congratulatory one, from the doctor. Such a position – maintaining good relations with everyone – was typical of Euwe both as a person, and as President. He never put pressure on anyone, or got upset, and he always sought a compromise. Such a manner of behaviour contrasted sharply with that of the Soviet chess authorities, who always intended to press, strongly following one course that had been worked out beforehand... So that Fischer nevertheless played the match for the world championship, Max may have violated the rules; regarding this he even had a dispute with Botvinnik, but Euwe was undoubtedly the best President of FIDE in all the history of this organisation!'

Incidentally, Karpov, whom Euwe proclaimed world champion in 1975 (after Fischer had refused to defend his title on FIDE's terms), also considers the Dutchman to have been a very good FIDE President, although he made one very serious mistake: 'Euwe wanted to spread chess everywhere, to small countries, Third World countries, to all continents. In itself this was not bad, and I, as world champion, supported him in this, but neither he nor I could imagine what this would lead to. He proclaimed the motto "to every country its own grandmaster", and this led not only to the inflation of the grandmaster title, but also to the lack of control in the chess world, i.e. to the situation that we now have.'

What can you do, that was Euwe's presidential credo. He wrote: 'Of course, I had to have political flair, but most of my efforts were aimed at the development of chess... The Russians have to be reckoned with, they play a very important role in chess, and they have the strongest players. Without the Russians, FIDE is not able to solve a single problem.'

It has to be said that Euwe did not harbour any illusions with regard to the communist regime. Long before, during the Moscow part of the 1948 match-tournament, he learned a great deal from confidential conversations with his old friends Flohr and Keres, and something from a chat with Botvinnik. 'Euwe told me,' writes Genna Sosonko, 'that at the time he asked Botvinnik: "Where are X and Y?" – he remembered them from his pre-war visit to the USSR (1934). "They turned out to be enemies of the people," the latter replied. "And what about Z?" "He too," gloomily replied the Patriarch. Euwe''s attitude to the USSR changed conclusively after the Hungarian events of 1956: he was so shocked by what happened that he was prepared to fly to Moscow, to the Kremlin, to explain that one simply cannot do this...'

He worked without a break, constantly flying around the world – and was even nicknamed 'The flying Dutchman'. As his friend Kmoch remarked many years earlier, 'Euwe can breathe freely only when he is suffocated by work.' But he always found time for his friends!

'Whereas, for most people, work is unlimited and it only allows the framework of the allotted time to be filled,' writes Denker, 'for Max, on the contrary, time did not have any limit and it served to fulfil the planned work. That which Max wrote about Tartakower is also applicable to himself: "Without such people, the chess world would not be what it is. It is not rules and regulations that make up the essence of the chess community, but individuals." '

At the 1978 Congress, worn out by the endless scandals (the notorious match in Baguio had only just finished), he declined to run for a third term of office, although he remained an active FIDE official.

In my view, as President, Euwe was in some sense an idealist, but even so he was mainly a pragmatist. Alas, at a critical moment of chess history, during the Karpov-Korchnoi world championship match, when it was essential to curb Soviet aggression, he was unable to do anything. Departing from Baguio after the third game, he appointed as FIDE representative responsible for the match... Campomanes! Everyone knows the consequences – read Korchnoi's book *Anti-Chess*.

Of course, I realise that the Soviet machine was then very strong, and yet I would not like to think that it was impossible to fight against it – since I would not like to believe in such a predetermination of history. It is a pity that during the years of his presidency Euwe did not discern and did not anticipate those dangers that threatened FIDE, and which later, in 1980, led to its complete subjugation to Moscow and to moral bankruptcy...

In May 1981 he received congratulations on his 80th birthday – both at home, and at a reception in the historic Carlton Hotel, and at the FIDE Congress in Atlanta. He looked in good health and had great plans. 'Just you see, I will yet become world correspondence champion!' he said with an ironic smile. Alas, eighteen months later Euwe died of a heart attack... In Amsterdam a square was named after him and also a chess centre, where his outstanding teaching and literary heritage is preserved.

In conclusion – here are some noteworthy comments by the world champions.

Lasker: 'Euwe possessed from nature that sense of reality, which is moulded in the young of today. This feeling was possibly implanted in the character of Dutchmen since the times of their lengthy struggle for freedom... In chess Euwe probably knows everything that was ever played or printed. He is familiar with the teachings of Steinitz, the works of Tarrasch, and also those of Réti, Tartakower and Nimzowitsch, he has played in tournaments and matches against all the modern masters, and has analysed the openings and the endgame. His newspaper and magazine articles and his books run to many volumes. At the same time he also found time to finish his education, defend his good and widely-recognised doctor's dissertation and carry out his teaching work.'

Euwe: 'A world champion should love chess more than his own life and, of course, more than his own fame. He should love chess like Steinitz and possess the endurance of Lasker, the tact of Capablanca, the intelligence of Chigorin, the fury of Alekhine, the educated thinking of Botvinnik, the discretion of Smyslov, the audacity of Tal, the imperturbability of Spassky, the ambition of Fischer and the calmness of Karpov.'

Botvinnik: 'Euwe is an extremely impetuous, active player. Even when defending he is always aiming for counterplay. He likes to play on the flanks. He likes positions without weaknesses, with some freedom, and he makes disconcerting long moves. He aims for development. With a positional advantage he does not avoid exchanges, but satisfies himself with a better endgame. He exploits mistakes excellently. With a material advantage (a pawn, the exchange), he plays with redoubled strength. He has a subtle, excellent technique, not without tricks. In general he is a very good tactician. He knows the openings very well.'

Smyslov: 'From my youth I was familiar with the facets of Euwe's versatile chess activity: his books showed that he was a splendid teacher; the novelties employed in his games and his analyses in chess magazines showed that he was an outstanding theoretician. His aggressive handling of the opening on a realistic positional base, and his unexpected manoeuvres, his amazing skill in finding a veiled way out of a difficult position demonstrated the Dutch grandmaster's wonderful tactical gift. Later I was also able to appreciate fully the other fine qualities of the fifth world champion – industriousness, stamina, self-control, and his gentleman-like attitude to his opponents.'

Tal: 'Max Euwe was world champion for only two years, but his services to chess were very great. Hans Kmoch said that Euwe was a genius of organisation. Thorough preparation, exceptional concentration, strength of will – this is what we learned from Euwe.'

Petrosian: 'I was 13 or 14 when Euwe's manuals, which have now become bibliographic rarities, fell into my hands. I still remember well that his *Course of Chess Lectures* was my favourite book, and I studied it very thoroughly.'

Spassky: 'The fact that Euwe played better in the 1935 match is quite obvious. The fact that, although not a professional, he nevertheless managed to defeat Alekhine must be regarded as a competitive and creative feat. And in addition the quality of the games was pretty high. By winning against Alekhine he thereby joined the galaxy of chess stars.'

Karpov: 'I have the warmest memories of Max Euwe. I will not forget that moment when, as FIDE President, he laid the laurel wreath on me and wished me well, expressing his confidence that I would not become "king for a day". His *Course of Chess Lectures* is one of the first books from which I gained an impression of the ways that chess thought develops, and about the contribution to chess of its first classics. The games of Euwe himself, in which the logic of a mathematician is combined with keen combinative vision, demonstrate that his surge in the mid-1930s and his ascent to the top of chess were quite logical. Euwe's entire life is an example of selfless devotion to chess.'

CHAPTER TWO

Mikhail Moiseevich the Sixth

Mikhail Moiseevich Botvinnik (17 August 1911 – 5 May 1995) was undoubtedly one of the greatest champions, a genuine innovator who created an entire era in chess. His style was one of deep strategy, based on serious opening and psychological preparation, fine technique and accurately regulated positional and combinative decisions. Although, like Euwe, he had another specialty – he was an electrical engineer, a candidate and then a doctor of sciences – it was in chess that he was able to achieve the greatest professionalism. Botvinnik's scientific approach enabled him to create an unprecedented system of preparation for competitions, including fundamental opening research, a systematic study of his opponents' styles and a rigorous analysis of his own games, with their obligatory publication, so that they could be criticised by others.

Botvinnik removed the shroud of mystery from chess and constantly compared it with everyday situations. He called chess a typical inexact problem, similar to those which people have to solve in their daily lives, and said: 'For the solving of inexact tasks it is very important to limit the scale of the problem, to avoid getting bogged down in it – and only then is there a chance of solving it more exactly. Thus it would be wrong to think that chess does not reflect objective reality. It reflects that which a person thinks.'

This is the typical Botvinnik approach to chess, and also to life: the reducing of a problem to manageable dimensions. I remember how in the mid-1970s he warned me against getting carried away by complexity for the sake of complexity and he once said: 'You will never become an Alekhine if the variations control you, and not the other way round.' This distressed me at the time, but the wise Botvinnik, of course, was right.

In his later years he spoke out strongly against the speeding-up of chess and tried to create a powerful chess-playing computer program. 'Then grandmasters will be forced to compete with worthy opponents – computers – and revert to serious play. Evidently it is this that provides hopes of a turn for the better in the fate of chess.'

He is rightly regarded as the Patriarch of the Soviet Chess School – this as yet little-studied phenomenon of the 20th century. And I can only go along with the words of Petrosian, spoken at the closing of the 1963 match:

'We all regard ourselves as pupils of Botvinnik, and subsequent generations will learn from his games.'

'What do you want – to become Capablanca?'

Botvinnik was born not far from St Petersburg and spent his entire youth in this city. He learned chess only at the age of 12, but played a great deal and made rapid progress, studying Chigorin's *Shakhmatny Listok* of 1876-77 and opening books by Grekov and Nenarokov. He also recorded and analysed the games played on tour by Lasker, when the latter visited Leningrad in the winter of 1924.

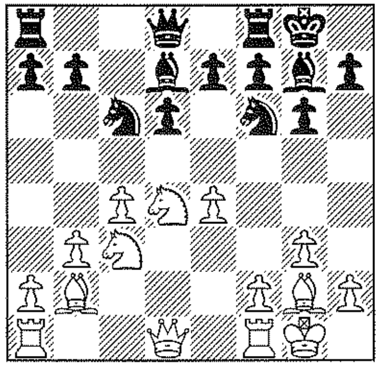
Misha's mother was against his passion for chess and grumbled: 'What do you want – to become Capablanca?' By a twist of fate, Botvinnik's first notable success was actually a win over the legendary Cuban – in a simultaneous display over 30 boards, which Capa gave in Leningrad on a free day of the Moscow international tournament (1925). 'In a hopeless position,' Mikhail Moiseevich recalls, 'Capablanca swept away the pieces (as a sign that he had resigned) and moved on. The expression on his face was not very pleasant. Therefore I am sceptical about eye-witness reports that the world champion praised my play.'

By that time Botvinnik was already a strong first category player. Six months later he won a semi-final of the Leningrad Championship (11½ out of 12!), shared second place in the final and travelled to Sweden as a member of the Leningrad team for a match against Stockholm. From that time onwards one of his favourite books was Ludwig Kolijn's popular primer, with additions by Rubinstein, Réti and Spielmann, which was personally presented to him by the author. Misha annotated two games from this match for the magazine *Shakhmatny Listok* – and that was how he began as a chess analyst.

In 1927 the 16-year-old made a successful debut in the 5th USSR Championship: he shared fifth place and exceeded the master norm by 2½ points! In his game with Ilya Rabinovich he made brilliant use of his favourite Stonewall Variation in the Dutch Defence with Black. But I should like to give another, lesser-known game from this tournament, which was also singled out by Fischer, who considered it typical of Botvinnik.

Game 30
M.Botvinnik-Kh.Kholodkevich
USSR Championship, Moscow 1927
King's Indian Defence E72

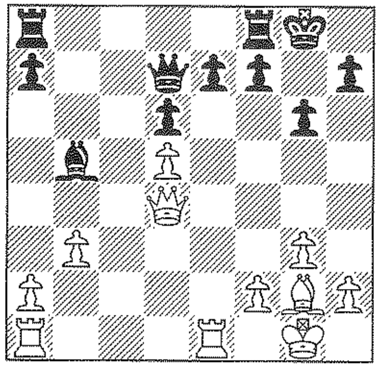
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 g3 (a purely experimental move order) **5...0-0 6 ♗g2 ♘bd7?!** (6...e5 or 6...c5! is better) **7 ♘ge2 c5 8 0-0 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘e5 10 b3 ♗d7 11 ♗b2 ♘c6**



12 ♘d5!

'At that time and in subsequent years I often used to employ this manoeuvre, which I borrowed from Rubinstein's games.' (Botvinnik) Remember Botvinnik's fine victory over Lilienthal (Moscow 1936) and his equally classic crushing wins with Black, with the help of ...♘c6-d4!, over Kirillov (Moscow 1931), Lisitsyn (Leningrad 1932) and Golberg (Moscow 1945).

12...♘xd5?! 13 exd5 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 b5 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♕d4+ ♔g8 17 cxb5 ♗xb5 18 ♖fe1 ♕d7?! (18...a5 is correct)

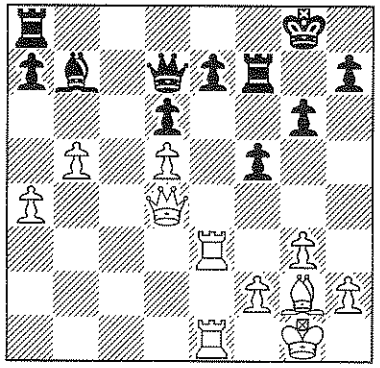


19 ♖e3 (19 a4!?) **19...f5?**

A fatal weakening of the e6-square. 19...a5 was essential.

20 a4 ♗a6 21 ♖ae1 ♖f7 22 b4! ♗b7 23 b5

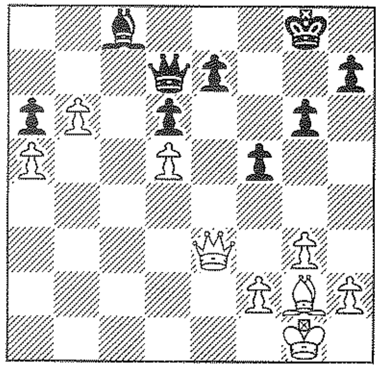
'Botvinnik is inimitable in his style – he plays with the accuracy of a machine. He already has a won position.' (Fischer) 'When White, after protecting his b5-pawn, advances his a-pawn to the fifth, and then the sixth rank, Black will be completely suffocated.' (Botvinnik)



23...a6

'In the book *Shakhmatnoe Tvorchestvo Botvinnika* (1965) (Botvinnik's Creative Work) it is said about this move: "Another and already decisive weakening." I don't agree, since there is no other way for the black rook to come into play.' (Fischer)

24 b6 ♖c8 25 a5 ♖c5 26 ♖c3! ♖xc3 (even worse is 26...♕c8 27 ♖ec1) **27 ♕xc3 ♖f8 28 ♕e3! ♖e8** (28...♔f7 29 ♕c6+ ♔e8 30 ♖c1) **29 ♖c1 ♖c8 30 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8** (or 30...♕xc8 31 ♕xe7 ♕c1+ 32 ♗f1 ♗xd5 33 b7)



31 ♕e6+! ♕xe6 32 dxe6 ♔g7 33 b7 ♗xb7 34 ♗xb7 ♔f6 35 ♗xa6 ♔xe6 36 ♗c8+ 1-0

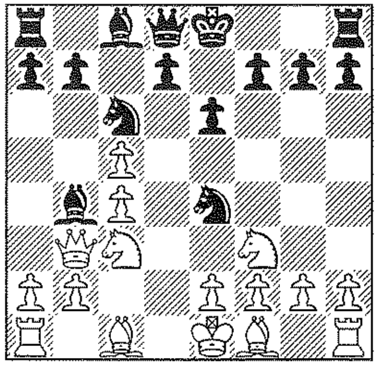
After finishing school, Mikhail began preparing for his Polytechnic Institute exams. 'For me the question of whether to study or play chess did not arise,' writes Botvinnik. 'Intuitively I realised that studying was also useful for chess; on the other hand, I considered myself obliged also to do something else – like everyone, this was nothing unusual...'

In his student years he played more rarely, but increasingly strongly. In the spring of 1930 he won a tournament of Leningrad masters in very confident fashion, and the following winter he also won the championship of the city, producing several good games. Here is one of them – perhaps the most mind-boggling.

Game 31
M.Botvinnik-G.Myasoedov
Leningrad Championship 1930/31
Nimzo-Indian Defence E23

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕b3 (at that time this was Botvinnik's favourite move) **4...c5 5 dxc5 ♘c6** (also playable is 5...♘a6 6 a3 ♗xc5 with equality, Eliskases-Botvinnik, Moscow 1936) **6 ♘f3** (6 ♗g5 h6!) **6...♘e4**

The alternative is 6...♘xd2.

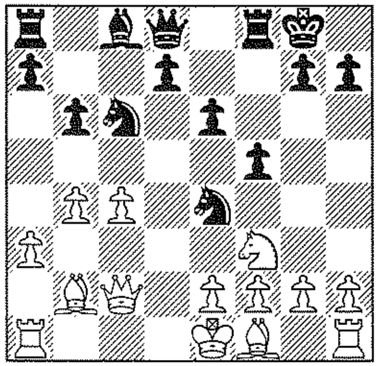


7 ♗d2 ♘xc5 8 ♕c2 f5 9 a3 ♗xc3 10 ♗xc3 0-0 11 b4 ♘e4 12 ♗b2

A recommendation of Kmoch. The game Stahlberg-Alekhine (Hamburg Olympiad 1930) went 12 e3 b6 13 ♗d3 ♘xc3 14 ♕xc3 ♗b7 15 0-0 ♘e7 with equality.

12...b6

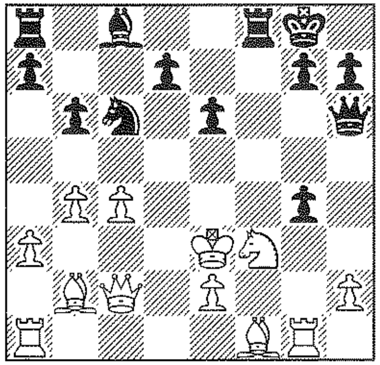
According to Botvinnik, 'simpler is 12...d6, similar to the game Winter-Sultan Khan (Hastings 1930/31).'



13 g4!?

'I have to admit that I had prepared this move beforehand and had made a thorough study of it. But if I could have foreseen all the consequences of the storm I provoked on the board... Here 13 g3 was more circumspect.' (Botvinnik)

13...♘xf2! 14 ♔xf2 fxg4 15 ♖g1 ♕h4+ 16 ♔e3 (but not 16 ♔g2?! gxf3+ 17 ♔h1 ♘d4! and not 16 ♖g3?! gxf3 17 ♔g1 ♘d4!) **16...♕h6+ 17 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 18 ♔e3 ♕h6+**

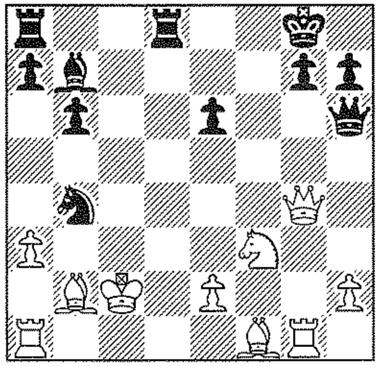


19 ♔d3

'At home I had considered this king journey without any apprehension, but at the board I decided on it only after lengthy hesitation. If now 19...e5 20 ♕d2! ♕d6+ 21 ♔c2, or 19...♕g6+ 20 ♔d2.' (Botvinnik)

19...d5! 20 ♕c1! (20 ♖xg4? e5! or 20 ♕d2? ♕g6+ 21 ♔c3 ♕e4! 22 ♕g5 e5!) **20...dxc4+ 21 ♕xc4 ♖d8+ 22 ♔c2 ♗b7 23 ♕xg4!** (23 ♖xg4 ♖ac8! with the threat of ...♘xb4+) **23...♘xb4+!**

Black attacks with great inspiration, and after a series of forced moves the game ends in an attractive draw.



24 axb4

'The remaining continuations favour Black: 24 ♕xb4 ♖ac8+ 25 ♗c3 ♗xf3 26 ♖d1! (26 exf3 a5!) 26...♖xc3+! 27 ♕xc3 ♗e4+ 28 ♖d3 ♖xd3! 29 exd3 ♕xh2+ 30 ♗g2 ♗xg2.' (Botvinnik). However, after 31 ♕c8+ ♔f7 32 ♕d7+ ♔f8 33 ♕d8+ White saves himself by perpetual check.

But doesn't 24 ♔b3 win? – after all, in the event of 24...♕e3+(?) 25 ♗c3 ♗d5+ 26 ♔b2 Black's attack peters out... But as soon as Fritz is switched on, it all becomes clear: 24...♗d5+! 25 ♔xb4 g6!! and White is completely defenceless!

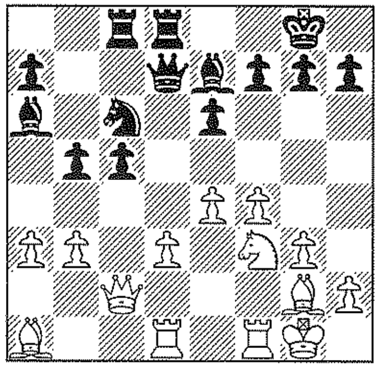
24...♖ac8+ 25 ♗c3 ♖xc3+ 26 ♔xc3 ♕e3+ 27 ♔b2 ♖d2+! (one sacrifice after another!) **28 ♘xd2 ♕xd2+ 29 ♔b1 ♕d1+ 30 ♔b2 ♕d2+ ½-½**

And now another vivid example of the future world champion's tactical mastery.

Game 32

A.Yurgis-M.Botvinnik

Leningrad 1931

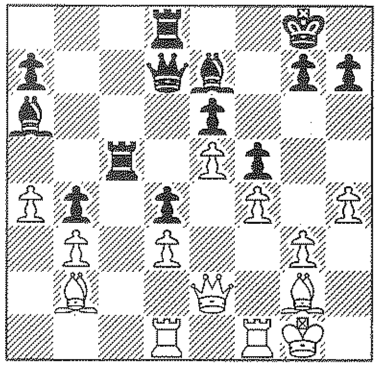


20...b4!

'Black prepares a standard exchange sacrifice. For this he needs to open the c-file and establish his pawns at b4 and d4.' (Botvinnik)

21 a4 ♘d4 (but not 21...♗xd3? 22 ♕b2 and ♘e1) **22 ♕b2 ♗f6 23 e5 ♗e7 24 ♘xd4 cxd4 25 ♕e2 ♖c5 26 ♗b2 f5?!** (an unnecessary move) **27 h4?!**

The only correct continuation was 27 exf6 ♗xf6 28 ♗h3, obtaining counterplay.

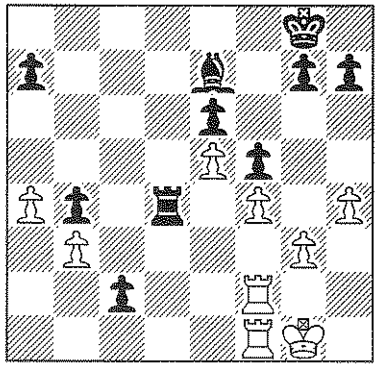


27...♖c3! 28 ♗xc3 dxc3 29 ♕e3 ♗xd3 (29...♕c7!? 30 ♖f2 ♖d4! and ...♗c5) **30 ♖f2 ♕d4 31 ♕xd4** (there is nothing better) **31...♖xd4 32 ♗f1**

32 ♗f3 ♗c5 33 ♔g2 c2 34 ♖c1 ♖c4!! etc.

32...c2 33 ♖c1 (33 ♖xc2 ♗xc2 34 ♖xd4 ♗c5) **33...♗xf1 34 ♖cxf1**

'Equally hopeless is 34 ♖fxf1 (34 ♔xf1 ♖d1+) 34...♖d2 35 ♖fe1 ♗c5+ 36 ♔h1 (36 ♔f1 ♖h2) 36...♗d4, ...♗b2xc1 and ...♖d1+. But now I am able to carry out one of the most beautiful combinations in my entire tournament career.' (Botvinnik)

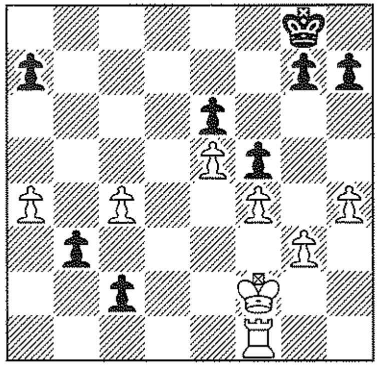


34...♖c4!!

Sacrificing the second rook! A stunning blow – one of those that you don't see immediately (even Fritz only suggests the tedious 34...♖d3?! 35 ♔g2 ♖xb3 36 ♖xc2). 35...c1♕ is threatened, so that the reply is forced.

35 bxc4 (no better is 35 ♖c1 ♗c5 36 ♔g2

♗xf2 37 bxc4 b3 or 37 ♔xf2 a5 and ...♖c3) **35...♗c5** (eliminating one of the rooks) **36 ♔g2 ♗xf2 37 ♔xf2 b3 0-1**



The passed pawns are irresistible.

Recognition

In the autumn of 1931 Botvinnik became USSR Champion for the first time. By defeating Ryumin in the decisive game, he finished two points ahead of him and achieved a genuinely grandmaster result – 13½ out of 17 (including 7½ out of 8 against his main rivals!).

'After such a success I had to avoid playing for a time – too much strength had been spent. In addition, I had to do some analytical work. The first book in which I participated was on the Alekhine-Capablanca match, where I annotated four of the games. In the games collection of the 1931 USSR Championship I wrote notes to half of the games, and edited the remainder. Analytical work is a good method of preparing for practical play.' Typical Botvinnik!

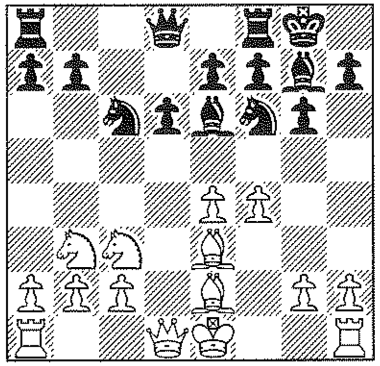
He also won in the next, 8th USSR Championship (1933), at the same time receiving the main brilliancy prize.

Game 33

V.Rauzer-M.Botvinnik

USSR Championship, Leningrad 1933
Sicilian Defence B74

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗e2 (later Rauzer brought 6 ♗g5 into use) **6...g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♘b3 ♗e6 9 f4 0-0**

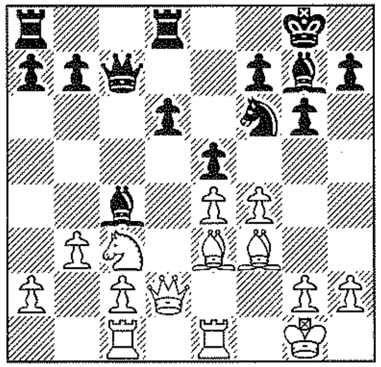


10 0-0

The famous game Alekhine-Botvinnik (Nottingham 1936) went 10 g4 d5! 11 f5 ♗c8 12 exd5 ♘b4 13 d6 ♕xd6 14 ♗c5 ♕f4 15 ♖f1 ♕xh2 16 ♗xb4 ♘xg4! 17 ♗xg4 ♕g3+ 18 ♖f2 ♕g1+ 19 ♖f1 ♕g3+ 20 ♖f2 ♕g1+ ½-½.

10...♘a5 11 ♘xa5 (if 11 f5!? ♗c4 12 ♗d3 Black has 12...♗xd3! 13 cxd3 d5 14 ♘xa5 ♕xa5 15 e5 d4) **11...♕xa5 12 ♗f3 ♗c4 13 ♖e1 ♖fd8 14 ♕d2 ♕c7 15 ♖ac1** (15 ♕f2!?) **15...e5! 16 b3?!**

It is safer to play 16 fxe5 dxe5 17 ♕f2 with equality.



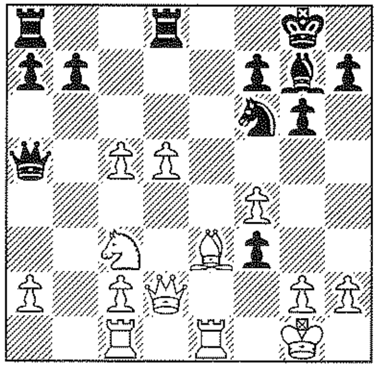
16...d5! (this counter-stroke actively reminds me of Karpov-Kasparov, Moscow 2nd matchgame 1985) **17 exd5!**

If 17 fxe5, then 17...♘xe4 is good.

17...e4! 18 bxc4

'The most sensible. This was the first of my games to appear in chess publications around the world, and this position was studied by analysts such as Tarrasch and Becker. They examined 18 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♗xd5 20 ♕d3 ♕c6 21 ♗f2 ♖e8 *(21...f5! – Burgess)*, and 18 ♘xe4 ♘xd5 19 ♔h1 ♘xe3 20 ♕xe3 ♗d4 21 ♕d2 ♗b2 *(21...♗e6 22 ♖cd1 ♗e5 23 ♕b4!? – Burgess)* 22 ♕b4 ♗xc1 23 ♘f6+! ♔h8! 24 ♕c3 ♗d2 25 ♕b2 ♗e6 26 ♘d5+ ♗c3 27 ♘xc3 ♔g8 28 ♘e4 ♕xf4 29 ♘f6+ ♔f8, and in neither case does White achieve anything.' (Botvinnik) But in the latter case 30 ♘d5! ♖xd5 31 ♕h8+ and ♕xa8 is strong, and therefore 22...♕xf4!? 23 ♖cd1 ♗e5 24 ♘g3 ♗a6 with equality, is better.

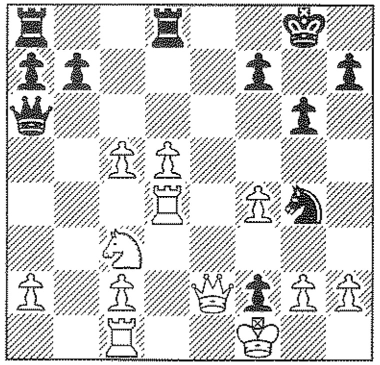
18...exf3 19 c5 ♕a5



20 ♖ed1?

It was essential to play Grigoriev's suggestion of 20 ♕d3! (but not 20 d6? ♘g4 21 ♘e4 ♕xd2 22 ♗xd2 f2+ 23 ♘xf2 ♗d4), and if 20...♘g4, then 21 ♘e4 f5 22 ♘g5 f2+ 23 ♗xf2 ♘xf2 24 ♔xf2 ♕xc5+ 25 ♔g3 ♖xd5 (25...♕xd5? 26 ♖e8+) 26 ♕b3 with advantage. Only in the 1960s did Botvinnik find 20...b6! 21 cxb6 (21 gxf3 bxc5) 21...axb6, when Black has at least equal chances.

20...♘g4! 21 ♗d4 (also bad is 21 ♘e4 ♕xd2 22 ♗xd2 ♗d4+ 23 ♔h1 fxg2+ 24 ♔xg2 ♖xd5) **21...f2+ 22 ♔f1** (22 ♔h1 ♖xd5! 23 ♘xd5 f1♕+ 24 ♖xf1 ♕xd2) **22...♕a6+ 23 ♕e2** (there is already no way of saving the game: 23 ♕d3 ♗xd4 24 ♕xa6 ♘xh2+ 25 ♔e2 f1♕+ 26 ♖xf1 bxa6, or 23 ♘e2 ♖xd5 24 c3 ♖e8 and ...♘e3+) **23...♗xd4 24 ♖xd4**



24...♕f6! 25 ♖cd1 (25 ♕d3 ♖e8 etc.) **25...♕h4 26 ♕d3 ♖e8 27 ♖e4 f5 28 ♖e6 ♘xh2+**

This is simpler than Tarrasch's suggestion of 28...♖ad8 29 ♕b5 (29 ♕g3 ♕xg3 30 hxg3 ♖xe6 31 dxe6 ♘e3+) 29...♖xe6 30 dxe6 ♖xd1+ 31 ♘xd1 ♘xh2+ 32 ♔e2 f1♕+.

29 ♔e2 ♕xf4 0-1

In view of 30 ♖f1 ♘xf1 31 ♔xf1 ♖xe6 32 dxe6 ♕e5.

Thus, the Soviet chess fraternity had acquired an obvious leader, and the Kremlin set the objective of winning international recognition. At the end of 1933 Botvinnik, 'displaying the qualities of a true Bolshevik' (as Krylenko put it), drew a match (6-6) with Flohr, at that time one of the best of the young foreign grandmasters: after the match Flohr won in Hastings, ahead of the great Alekhine. Then there was a training tournament for masters with the participation of Euwe in Leningrad: 1. Botvinnik 7½ out of 11... 6. Euwe – 5½.

Then – the 2nd Moscow international tournament (1935). Before the last round Botvinnik and Flohr were again leading. The former had to play Black with Ilya Rabinovich, the latter – with Alatortsev. And here Mikhail was visited in his room by his patron, the formidable Justice Commissariat Krylenko, then the chess boss of the country: 'What would you say if Rabinovich were to lose to you?' The reply was severe: 'If I realise that I am being gifted the point, I myself will place a piece en prise and immediately resign the game!' Krylenko asked: 'But what to do?' To which Botvinnik replied: 'I think that Flohr himself will suggest agreeing two draws...'

That is what happened, and it ended in a share of first place: 1-2. Botvinnik and Flohr – 13 out of 19; 3. Lasker – 12½; 4. Capablanca – 12. Incidentally, the latter enthusiastically declared that 'Botvinnik would win a match against Euwe, who, as is known, will play a match with Alekhine for the world championship.'

In the 3rd Moscow international tournament (1936), this time a double-round event, the placings were different: 1. Capablanca – 13 out of 18; 2. Botvinnik – 12; 3. Flohr – 9½; 4. Lilienthal – 9; 5. Ragozin – 8½; 6. Lasker – 8 etc. Here too in the final round 'politics' interfered. Capa was half a point ahead of Botvinnik and had to play Eliskases, while Botvinnik was paired against Levenfish. Realising the awkwardness of Levenfish's position (the authorities had allegedly 'asked' him to lose the game), the ex-world champion said to him during a walk before the round: 'Don't worry, I'll rescue you – I'll win against Eliskases.' And he won! While Levenfish, as in the first cycle, confidently gained a draw with Botvinnik...

Nottingham 1936 was an unusually strong tournament, for the first time in many years assembling practically all the current stars (apart from the young Keres): 1-2. Botvinnik and Capablanca – 10 out of 14; 3-5. Euwe, Fine and Reshevsky – 9½; 6. Alekhine – 9; 7-8. Flohr and Lasker – 8½; 9. Vidmar – 6; 10-11. Bogoljubow and Tartakower – 5½ etc.

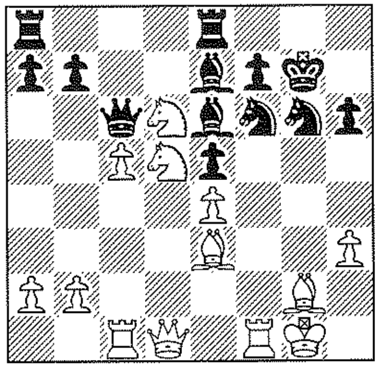
Botvinnik arrived for the tournament a few days in advance (following the wise advice of Lasker: 'to acclimatise'), together with his wife, which was very hard to arrange: it was rare to be sent abroad, and with your wife – even more so. But Krylenko helped...

And Mikhail justified the trust! Marking his 25th birthday with a draw against Capablanca, he went through the entire tournament undefeated ('Botvinnik has a sense of danger,' wrote Alekhine), scored six wins and at the same time won the prize 'for the most brilliant game of the tournament.'

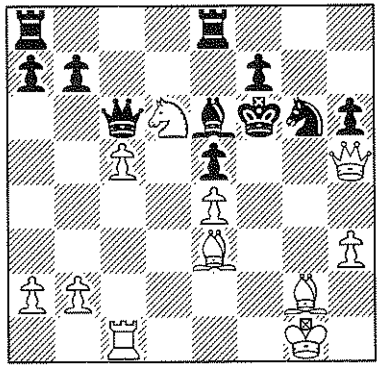
Game 34

M.Botvinnik-S.Tartakower

Nottingham 1936



21 ♘xe7! ♘xe7 22 ♖xf6! (deciding the outcome with a direct attack) **22...♔xf6 23 ♕h5 ♘g6**



24 ♘f5!

'The main subtlety: 24...♗xf5? is bad because of 25 exf5, while if 24...♖h8 White wins by either 25 h4 ♗xf5 (25...♗xa2 26 ♖d1 ♖ad8 27 ♗g5+ hxg5 28 ♕xg5+ ♔e6 29 ♘g7 mate) 26 exf5 ♘f4! 27 ♗xf4 ♖ag8 28 ♗g5+ hxg5 29 hxg5+ ♔e7 30 f6+ ♔d8 31 ♕xh8 ♖xh8 32 ♗xc6 bxc6 33 ♖c1, or 25 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 26 ♕xh6.' (Botvinnik)

24...♖g8 25 ♕xh6 ♗xa2 26 ♖d1 ♖ad8 27 ♕g5+ ♔e6 28 ♖xd8 f6 29 ♖xg8 ♘f4 30 ♕g7 1-0

Before this Mikhail had gained a splendid win over Bogoljubow, who immediately was filled with respect for him. ' "You are all dandies, I lose to you accidentally," Bogoljubow once declared to his card-playing partners Vidmar and Tartakower, and, on seeing me at that moment, he added: "But to him – not accidentally!" Botvinnik recalls.'

Towards the end he also crushed Vidmar in spectacular fashion, earning himself yet another brilliancy prize.

Game 35

M.Botvinnik-M.Vidmar

Nottingham 1936

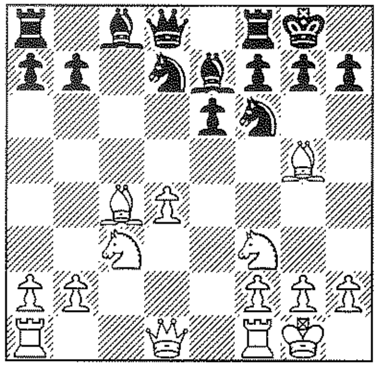
Queen's Gambit Declinded D60

1 c4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♘c3 0-0 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 ♗d3

'At that time this move appealed to me, not only as being less studied, but also because it is useful for White to avoid the routine 7 ♖c1, as the position of this rook on its initial square may be useful in the event of a pawn offensive on the queenside,' writes Botvinnik, having in mind his game with Yurev (Leningrad 1927/28): 7...a6?! 8 c5! c6 9 b4 a5 10 a3 axb4 11 axb4 ♖xa1 12 ♕xa1 b6 13 ♗f4! bxc5 14 bxc5 ♘h5 15 ♕a7! etc.

7...c5 8 0-0 cxd4 9 exd4 dxc4 10 ♗xc4

Positions with an isolated d4-pawn were a 'hobby horse' of Botvinnik, who disclosed virtually all their resources! Previously many masters, on obtaining an 'isolani' in the centre, experienced an almost mystical fear – apparently under the influence of Steinitz's impressive wins over Zukertort (*Volume 1, Game No.18*) and the powerful logical arguments of the first world champion, who spoke out against the creation of unnecessary weaknesses in the position. But Botvinnik demonstrated that the activity of the pieces and the pressure in the centre more than compensate for the insignificant defect in the pawn structure.



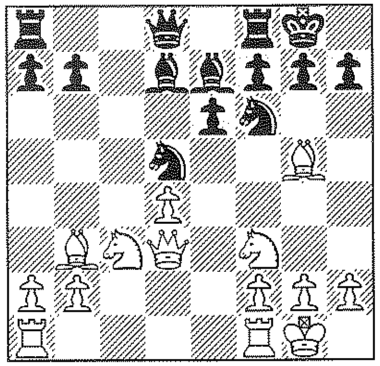
10...♘b6

'10...a6 was undoubtedly more accurate, provoking the reply 11 a4, which would have given Black the b4-square.' (Botvinnik) For example: 11...♘b6 12 ♗b3 ♗d7 13 ♕e2 (13 ♘e5 ♗c6 14 ♖e1 ♘fd5 15 ♗d2 ♗g5! with equality) 13...♗c6 (13...♘fd5!? 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♘e5 ♖ac8 with equality, Levenfish) 14 ♖fd1 (Spassky-Darga, Beverwijk 1967) 14...♘fd5 with equality.

11 ♗b3 ♗d7

An earlier game Botvinnik-Batuev (Leningrad 1930) went 11...♘bd5?! 12 ♘e5 (12 ♕e2!? b6 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 ♖fe1 ♗e6 15 ♘e5! – Korchnoi) 12...♘d7 13 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 14 ♕e2 ♘f6 15 ♖fd1 b6 16 ♖ac1 ♗b7 17 f3! (it is too early for 17 ♘xf7?! ♖xf7 18 ♕xe6 on account of 18...♘ed5) 17...♖c8? (a blunder; after 17...♘ed5 18 ♘e4 ♖c8 19 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 20 ♗c2 there would still have been all to play for) 18 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 19 ♕xe6 ♕f8 (or 19...♘ed5 20 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 22 ♖xc8 and wins) 20 ♘e4 ♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♘fd5 22 ♘d6 ♗a8 23 ♖e1! g6 24 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 25 ♕xe7 1-0.

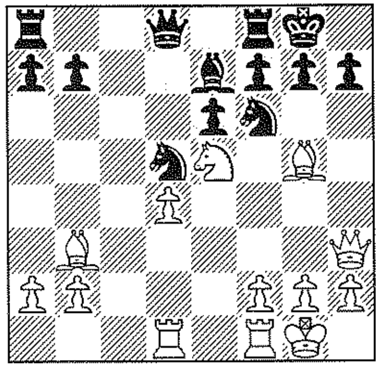
12 ♕d3 ♘bd5?!



'A further inaccuracy. Black should aim for simplification – 12...♘fd5, although after 13 ♗e3 (13 ♗c2 g6! with the threat of 14...♘b4) 13...♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♗a4 15 c4 White retains some advantage.' (Botvinnik)

13 ♘e5 ♗c6 14 ♖ad1 ♘b4 15 ♕h3 ♗d5 16 ♘xd5 ♘bxd5?

Here 16...♘fxd5 17 ♗c1! ♖c8 was now simply essential, with a cramped but more or less solid position.

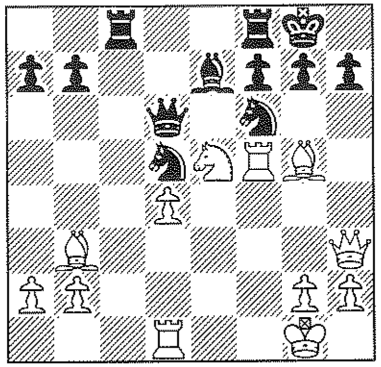


17 f4! (a march of the f-pawn, which has become classic) **17...♖c8**

After 17...g6? 18 ♗h6 ♖e8 19 ♗a4 Black would have lost the exchange, while if 17...♘e4? White had prepared 18 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 (18...♖xf7 19 ♕xe6) 19 ♖de1! with an irresistible attack.

18 f5 (like a battering-ram!) **18...exf5?** (18...♕d6 19 fxe6 fxe6 was more tenacious) **19 ♖xf5 ♕d6?!**

'This loses quickly, but 19...♖c7 20 ♖df1 would also not have saved Black, for example: 20...♘b6 21 ♕h4 (threatening the rook sacrifice on f6) 21...♘bd5 22 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 23 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 24 ♖xf7 ♗xg5 25 ♕xg5!, or 20...a6 21 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 22 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♖xf7 ♗xg5 24 ♕e6!' (Botvinnik)



20 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 (20...♔xf7 21 ♗xd5+) **21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6** (not 21...♘xf6? because of 22 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 23 ♕xc8+) **22 ♖xd5 ♕c6 23 ♖d6 ♕e8 24 ♖d7 1-0**

'The course of the event was followed with particular attention by Soviet society,' writes N.Grekov, 'since competing in this highly important event was our champion, Young Communist League member M.M.Botvinnik. He conducted the entire tournament with unswerving energy... The victory of comrade Botvinnik was not only greeted with a feeling of satisfaction by the workers of the Soviet Union, but it also found unanimous recognition in the bourgeois chess world...' This triumph was marked by a large leading article in *Pravda* and the awarding of the Badge of Honour.

As was the custom, the winner sent a letter to comrade Stalin (just as half a century later Karpov reported to Brezhnev from Baguio and Merano). 'As a matter of fact, all this was organised by Krylenko,' Botvinnik explains. 'He had come to know me quite well, and he realised that through modesty I myself would not write, but the absence of a letter could be detrimental to chess.'

The very distinctive relations between the leader of Soviet chess players and their director (who was shot in 1938) are interestingly described by grandmaster Shamkovich: 'Krylenko very much sympathised with Botvinnik, and regarded him with a certain respect and even piety. Whereas before the mighty People's Commissar people ingratiated themselves (they were deadly afraid of him), Botvinnik related to him as an equal. He always maintained his independence, which did not prevent him from being fairly flexible and cautious. But he never did anything base and did not grovel, which sharply distinguished him from many... This is hardly explained by his particular personal courage, it was simply that he knew his worth and to some extent he sensed his own indispensability: they could arrest whom they wanted, but with him this was more difficult – there was not another Botvinnik in the country!'

Perhaps the most valuable thing both for the developing grandmaster, and for his patron, was the opinion expressed by Alekhine: 'Botvinnik's wonderful achievement in Nottingham confirms that he is the most probable candidate for the title of world champion. I personally think that he has every chance of becoming world champion in the next few years. Apart from enormous talent he possesses all the competitive qualities that are of decisive importance for success – fearlessness, self-control, an accurate feeling for position and, of course, youth.'

In 1937 Botvinnik decided to defend his doctor's dissertation and for the second successive year he missed the national championships. Krylenko was very unhappy about this ('I will raise your behaviour at the Central Committee!'): for the battle with the 'bourgeois West' the strongest Soviet player had to be determined! And Botvinnik challenged Grigory Levenfish, twice USSR Champion (1934/35 and 1937) and the outstanding grandmaster of the older generation.

The conditions of the Levenfish-Botvinnik match for the title of USSR Champion (Moscow/Leningrad 1937) mimicked those of the unforgettable Capablanca-Alekhine encounter: the winner would be the first to win six games, draws not counting, and with a score of 5-5 the champion, i.e. Levenfish, would retain his title. That is what happened: Botvinnik won the first game, lost the second and third, then after a couple of draws he won three times in a row, but... Levenfish drew even in the 10th and 11th games, answered a defeat in the 12th with a win in the 13th and achieved the desired score of +5 -5 =3. An enviable number of decisive games!

It stands to reason that the national champion had every right to appear in a major foreign tournament; such an event was planned in 1938 in Holland. Levenfish later related that Capablanca had even promised to bring or send him an invitation to the tournament. But... that is not what happened! 'Levenfish tried to insist that he should represent the Soviet Union, but they did not agree with him, and I was entrusted with playing in the AVRO tournament,' Botvinnik recalls without a hint of embarrassment (moreover, he was again allowed to travel abroad with his wife). For Levenfish this was, in his words, a moral knock-out: all the efforts of the previous years had been in vain...

There is nothing surprising about this violation of the competitive principle: the Kremlin needed only one leader of Soviet chess, who, besides, had to be young and 'correct'. And Botvinnik quite sincerely believed that he was the chosen one. 'I was lucky in life,' he wrote towards the end of his days. 'As a rule, my personal interests coincided with the interests of society – it is this that probably constitutes genuine happiness. And I was not alone – in the fight for the interests of society I had support. But not all with whom I associated were as fortunate as I was. The personal interests of some people differed from those of society, and these people interfered with my work. It was then that conflicts arose.'

Challenge to the Titans

The double-round super-tournament of the eight strongest grandmasters in the world, organised in 1938 by the Dutch radio company AVRO, stands apart in the history of chess. No such elite event occurred either before, or later (with the possible exception of Las Palmas 1996, where the top six in the world rating list came together). It assembled all the top players from Nottingham, only the 70-year-old Lasker being replaced by the 22-year-old Keres, who had won a whole series of tournaments – from Bad Nauheim 1936 (together with Alekhine) to Semmering-Baden 1937.

They played in various towns, which was especially hard on the 'old men' (Capa and Alekhine): 1-2. Fine and Keres – 8½ out of 14; 3. Botvinnik – 7½; 4-6. Alekhine, Euwe and Reshevsky – 7; 7. Capablanca – 6; 8. Flohr – 4½. It was this tournament that symbolised the ending of the heroic era of chess titans, who had reigned mainly thanks to their natural talent, and the start of the era of chess professionalism, without which high achievements are nowadays unthinkable.

Botvinnik can really be regarded as the first genuine chess professional, and he described the system of preparation he had developed in his books on the Flohr-Botvinnik match (1934) and the 11th USSR Championship (1939). In particular, he was the first to talk about a strict tournament regime, which he himself followed all his life: 'After breakfast I would take a walk (1 hour), then prepare for the game (25-30 minutes), after which I would take a rest from chess. An hour and a half before the game I would have a meal, and then I would lie down for about an hour. Lying down before a game is very beneficial, since after this you feel invigorated and, importantly, you are not diverted by extraneous thoughts. After relaxing I would go on foot to the tournament, and therefore I would again walk for 20-25 minutes before the game.'

In the AVRO tournament, although Botvinnik did not take first place, he gained truly historic wins over Alekhine and Capablanca, which became part of the golden treasury of chess.

Game 36

M.Botvinnik-A.Alekhine

AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938

Queen's Gambit Declinded D41

1 ♘f3 d5 2 d4 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e3

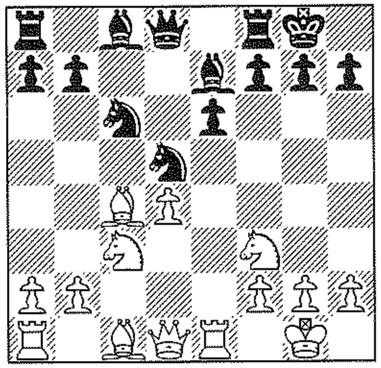
Prudently avoiding the variations with 6 g3 and 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♗b4+ (*Volume 1, Game No.145*), which were tested in the Alekhine-Euwe return match (Holland 1937).

6...♘c6 7 ♗c4!? (a specially prepared novelty; for 7 ♗d3 cf. *Games Nos.117, 119 and 120*) **7...cxd4**

7...♘xc3 (*Game No.46*) is inferior. 'If Black had replied 7...♘f6, the game would have transposed into a familiar variation of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. Possibly my opponent overlooked this factor...' (Botvinnik)

8 exd4 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1

Again (as in *Game No.35*) Botvinnik's favourite position with an 'isolani' at d4.



10...b6?!

A highly dubious decision. However, as later games showed, White also has a powerful initiative after 10...♘xc3 11 bxc3 b6 12 ♗d3 ♗b7 13 h4!: 13...♗xh4 (otherwise 14 ♘g5 is unpleasant) 14 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 15 ♖e3 etc. Apparently the best move is 10...a6.

11 ♘xd5! exd5 12 ♗b5

Despite the completely symmetric pawn structure, Black is condemned to passive defence in view of his obvious weakness on the c-file and the somewhat uncoordinated state of his pieces.

12...♗d7?!

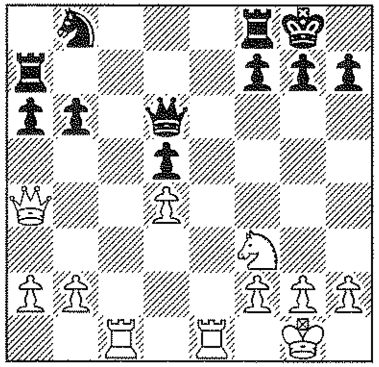
Now the exchange of the light-squared bishops is unavoidable and Black's position becomes even more vulnerable. However, things are also not easy for him after 12...♗b7 (12...♕c7 13 ♗f4!; 12...♘a5 13 ♘e5!) 13 ♕a4 ♖c8 (13...♕d6!?) 14 ♗f4 a6 15 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 16 ♘e5 ♖c8 17 ♕d7! ♗a8 18 ♖ac1 (Neikirch-Sliwa, Sofia 1957).

13 ♕a4 ♘b8 (sadly necessary: bad is 13...♖c8 14 ♗f4 with the threat of ♖ac1) **14 ♗f4 ♗xb5 15 ♕xb5 a6 16 ♕a4**

'Retaining control of the c6-square and simultaneously threatening to win the a6-pawn by 17 ♗xb8. All that Black can do is to seek simplification.' (Botvinnik)

16...♗d6 17 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 18 ♖ac1 ♖a7

Black's position looks quite defensible, but unfortunately for him, all his weaknesses are chronic.



19 ♕c2!

In this position Botvinnik makes a valuable methodological comment: 'The c-file is more important than the e-file, since in the future the c7-square can be defended by the king, whereas the c7-square remains vulnerable.'

19...♖e7

The ending after 19...♘d7 (or 19...f6 20 ♕f5! and ♕e6+) 20 ♕c6! ♕xc6 21 ♖xc6 is also unpleasant.

20 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 21 ♕c7 ♕xc7 22 ♖xc7

Thus, an endgame with an obvious positional advantage for White has been reached. But Alekhine correctly judged that the rook on its own was not able to cause any serious damage and could be evicted from the seventh rank.

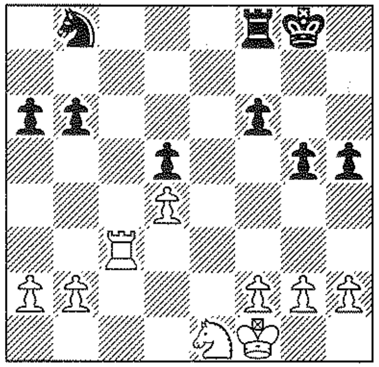
22...f6! 23 ♔f1

In the event of 23 ♖b7? ♖c8! 24 ♔f1 b5 Black seizes control of the c-file and all the danger is over for him.

23...♖f7 24 ♖c8+ ♖f8 25 ♖c3!

Stepping back, in order to return advantageously to c7 at an appropriate moment (for example, after 25...♘d7, 25...♖e8 or 25...♔f7). Do not be deluded by the symmetry of the pawns: Black is unable to coordinate his pieces. There now begins what Botvinnik later called 'the systematic exploitation in the endgame of advantages accumulated after an opening error by the opponent.'

25...g5!? (Alekhine goes in for new weaknesses, trying to diminish the role of the seventh rank, where sooner or later the enemy rook will be in control) **26 ♘e1 h5**



26...h6 would not have saved Black in view of 27 ♘c2 ♔f7 28 ♘e3 ♔e6 29 g4! and ♘f5. But now misfortune strikes from the other side.

27 h4!!

Fixing the weakness at h5. Whereas after the 'natural' 27 ♘c2 ♔f7 28 ♖c7+ ♔e6 things would clearly have improved for Black, now, by contrast, his defence becomes difficult in the extreme: his passive pieces are unable to operate effectively over the entire board.

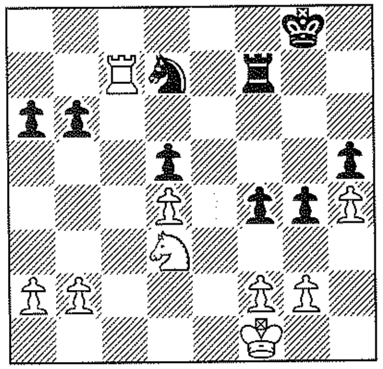
27...♘d7

27...♔f7 was perhaps better (27...gxh4 28 ♘f3! cannot be seriously considered), although after 28 hxg5 fxg5 29 ♘f3 ♔f6 30 ♘e5 the difference in the placing of the knights means that a draw would be a miracle. Instead 28 ♘f3 g4 29 ♘e1 ♖e8! (29...♔e6 30 ♘d3! etc.) with the hope of 30 f3 gxf3 31 gxf3 ♖e6! and ...♘c6 is not so clear, but even here after 30 g3! ♖e4 31 ♘g2 ♖xd4 32 ♖c7+ ♔e6 33 ♘f4+ ♔d6 34 ♖h7 and the capture on h5, the passed h-pawn gives White excellent chances.

28 ♖c7 (maintaining strict control!) **28...♖f7 29 ♘f3! g4 30 ♘e1**

With an elegant pendulum manoeuvre the knight has cleared the f4 square for itself, in order to attack the d5- and h5-pawns from there.

30...f5 31 ♘d3 f4 (preventing ♘f4, but the f4-pawn adds to the long list of targets)



32 f3!

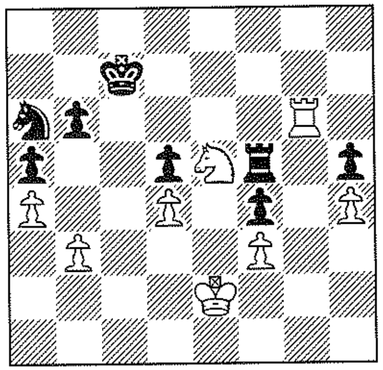
With mathematical precision! Avoiding the temptation of winning a pawn – 32 ♘b4, Botvinnik fixes another weakness. He knows that major gain of material is now not far off.

32...gxf3 33 gxf3 a5 (otherwise 34 ♘b4) **34 a4 ♔f8 35 ♖c6 ♔e7 36 ♔f2 ♖f5 37 b3** (there is absolutely no reason to hurry) **37...♔d8 38 ♔e2 ♘b8**

A desperate attempt to activate the wretched knight: 39 ♖xb6? ♔c7 and ...♘c6 with counter-chances.

39 ♖g6! (no, it won't escape its fate!) **39...♔c7 40 ♘e5** ('persuading' its opposite number not to take part in the rest of the game) **40...♘a6**

Here the game was adjourned.



41 ♖g7+

'Before the resumption, Alekhine informed me through an intermediary that he would resign the game, if I had sealed 41 ♖g5. I did not stop to discuss this offer, and informed my opponent that, if he thought I had sealed a poor move, he should altogether not have made such an offer, which might violate the secrecy of the sealed move.' (Botvinnik) And indeed, 41 ♖g5 would have won more quickly (41...♖xg5? 42 hxg5 ♔d6 43 g6 ♔e7 44 g7), but White has more than one way to win, and the choice here is a matter of taste.

41...♔c8 42 ♘c6 ♖f6 43 ♘e7+ ♔b8 44 ♘xd5 (at last!) **44...♖d6 45 ♖g5 ♘b4 46 ♘xb4 axb4**

The two knights, with such different fates, have disappeared from the board. But the pure rook endgame is also completely hopeless for Black.

47 ♖xh5 ♖c6 (or 47...♖xd4 48 ♖f5! ♔b7 49 ♖f6 ♔c7 50 h5 etc.) **48 ♖b5 ♔c7 49 ♖xb4 ♖h6 50 ♖b5 ♖xh4 51 ♔d3 1-0**

'This is one of those endings where there are no brilliant moves or complicated calculations; all the moves seem simple, but not one of them can be excluded, since they are all solidly inter-linked. It is this that constitutes their real strength.' (Botvinnik)

'Of the 14 games played by me,' declared Alekhine, 'only in one did I feel that I was outplayed by my opponent – that was the game with Botvinnik in the seventh round.' Such an admission by the world champion is worth a great deal...

And in the 11th round Botvinnik played what was altogether the 'game of his life' against Capablanca. It was not just that it was judged the most brilliant in the tournament (true, Capa preferred the Botvinnik-Alekhine game...) and to be worth two first prizes, but it was even suggested that, by analogy with the 'immortal' and 'evergreen' games, it should be called the 'peerless' or 'classical'!

Game 37

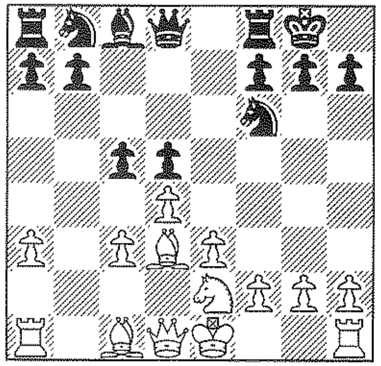
M.Botvinnik-J.R.Capablanca

AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938

Nimzo-Indian Defence E49

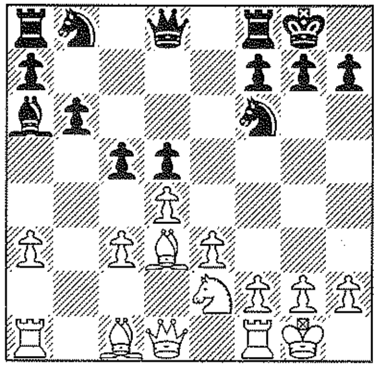
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 d5 (more flexible is 4...0-0 or 4...c5 – *Game No.28*) **5 a3! ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♘e2**

This has been established in theory as the Botvinnik Variation in the Rubinstein System. Nowadays everyone knows that the premature determination of the central pawn structure by Black gives his opponent greater opportunities for seizing the initiative. But at that time the two players were proceeding through virgin territory – the ways of developing in the Nimzo-Indian Defence were only just beginning to be charted.



9...b6 (9...♘c6) **10 0-0** (10 a4 – *Game No.27*) **10...♗a6**

'The most unpleasant piece for Black is the white bishop at d3; therefore he aims to exchange it.' (Botvinnik)



By all the standards that were accepted in the 1920s-1930s, Black has absolutely nothing to complain of. He has good pawns, comfortable development and no appreciable weaknesses. White does not have a single concrete threat. But Botvinnik foresaw that after f2-f3 and e3-e4-e5 he could obtain a strong attack on the kingside. You don't believe it? Well, in this you are at least in agreement with the great Capa...

11 ♗xa6

Experience has shown that the immediate 11 f3 is more accurate – after 11...♗xd3 12

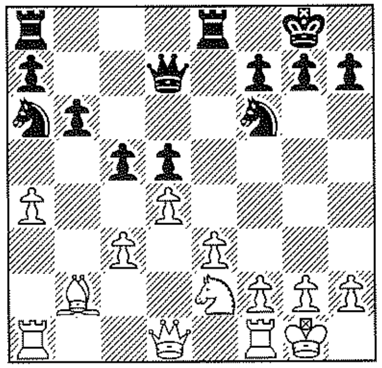
♕xd3 the queen ends up at d3 all the same, whereas the knight at b8 still has to be developed. For example: 12...♖e8 (12...♘c6? 13 e4!) 13 ♘g3 ♘c6 14 ♗b2 (14 ♖a2!? ♖c8 15 ♖e2) 14...c4 15 ♕d2 ♕d7?! (a sharper alternative is 15...b5 16 ♖ae1 a5 17 e4 b4! 18 e5 ♘d7 19 f4!) 16 ♖ae1 h5?! 17 e4 g6 18 ♗c1! ♘h7 19 ♕h6! ♖e6 20 f4! ♘c7 21 f5 with a powerful attack (Kasparov-Ivanovic, Niksic 1983).

11...♘xa6 12 ♗b2?!

Alas, pioneers are doomed to make mistakes: 12 ♕d3! is correct – when carrying out a deep strategic plan, move order is always important. However, it is easy, as we do nowadays, to improve upon old variations move by move – and how much harder it was to create a new, long-term strategy!

12...♕d7 13 a4 (forced: if 13 ♕d3 Black now has 13...♕a4! with a blockade of the queenside) **13...♖fe8?!**

'A surprising mistake for Capablanca!' (Botvinnik) And indeed, after the obvious 13...cxd4 14 cxd4 ♖fc8 followed by ...♖c4 and ...♖ac8 White would have had to forget about the breakthrough in the centre and switch to defence.



14 ♕d3 c4?!

'This is already a serious positional error. Black evidently assumed that White would subsequently be unable to advance his e-pawn, and that on the queenside Black's advantage would tell; Capablanca had in mind the manoeuvre ...♘a6-b8-c6-a5-b3, after which the a4-pawn is hard to defend. However, Black's advantage on the queenside is not of great importance, whereas the e3-e4 breakthrough proves highly effective. He should have contented himself with the modest, but apparently adequate defence 14...♕b7.' (Botvinnik)

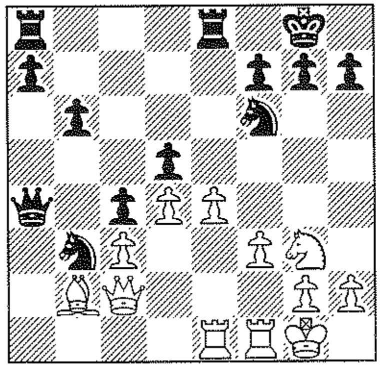
Capablanca's decision has a clear historical motive: throughout his long career the 50-year-old ex-world champion had never encountered the concept of 'latent dynamic factors', and his unique intuition and wealth of experience misfired, failing to send a signal about the danger of the resulting position. Capa started, as he put it, 'a battle of minds': he wanted to win...

15 ♕c2 ♘b8 16 ♖ae1 (this is much bolder than 16 ♗a3 ♘c6 17 ♗b4 with equality; 16 ♘g3!?) **16...♘c6** (16...♘h5!?) **17 ♘g3 ♘a5**

If 17...♘e4, then 18 ♘h1! and in every case White carries out his plan, for example: 18...f5 19 f3 ♘d6 20 ♗a3 g6 21 ♘g3 followed by the inevitable e3-e4, and Black's weakened king is a constant headache for him.

18 f3 ♘b3 (both players are happy: the a4-pawn falls, but the long-awaited breakthrough in the centre is also prepared) **19 e4 ♕xa4**

This rather pitiful pawn has played the important role of bait for the tiger!



20 e5

Curiously, the identical position, but with the bishop on a3, occurred in the games Botvinnik-Alexander (USSR-Great Britain Radio Match 1946) and Euwe-Denker (Groningen 1946), where White also built up appreciable pressure (*Game No.27*).

20...♘d7 (but not 20...♘c5? 21 ♖e2!) **21 ♕f2**

'Forced in view of the threat of 21...♘bc5, which would have improved the position of Black's queen's knight.' (Botvinnik)

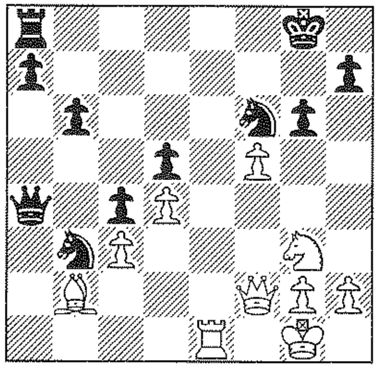
However, half a century later, in the magazine *Shakmaty v SSSR* (1988 No.3), the Moscow master Vladimir Goldin suggested 21 ♖e2!?, parrying not only the knight move to c5, but also 21...g6?! (21...a5 22 f4 b5 23 f5 b4 24 ♘h5 ♕c6 25 e6! etc.) 22 f4 f5 in view of 23 ♘xf5! gxf5 24 ♕xf5, for example: 24...♕c6 25 e6 ♘f8 (or 25...♔h8 26 ♗a3) 26 ♕f7+ ♔h8 27 f5 ♖ac8 28 f6 ♖c7 29 e7 and wins. Botvinnik successfully carried out a similar knight sacrifice on f5 against Larsen (Noordwijk 1965).

In any case, the storm clouds are gathering over the black king: the white knight is aiming for f5 and d6, and the destructive advance of the f-pawn is also threatened. But Capablanca is not afraid of ghosts: a convinced supporter of economic means in chess, he was always distinguished by his amazing ability to defend with a minimum of force, while his main army was occupied somewhere else.

21...g6 22 f4 f5!? (forcing the opening of the e-file for the exchange of rooks) **23 exf6**

There is no other way of getting to the king.

23...♘xf6 24 f5 ♖xe1 25 ♖xe1



25...♖e8!

With the help of a tactical trick (the knight at f6 is indirectly defended: 26 fxg6 hxg6 27 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8) Capa reduces White's attacking potential. After 25...♖f8? 26 ♕f4! his attack is irresistible: 26...♕a2 (26...♕d7 27 ♖e6! etc.) 27 fxg6! ♕xb2 (27...hxg6 28 ♕g5) 28 g7! ♔xg7 29 ♘f5+ ♔h8 30 ♕d6 ♖f7 (30...♔g8 31 ♕g3+) 31 ♕xf6+ with mate.

26 ♖e6! (the only chance) **26...♖xe6**

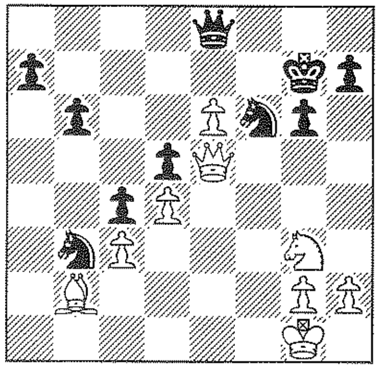
There is nothing else: 26...♔g7? 27 ♖xf6! ♔xf6 28 fxg6+ ♔xg6 (28...♔e7 29 ♕f7+ ♔d8 30 g7) 29 ♕f5+ ♔g7 30 ♘h5+ ♔h6 31 h4! ♖g8 32 g4 ♕c6 33 ♗a3! with a rapid mate.

27 fxe6 (after miraculously avoiding being burned in the fire of the attack, the modest f-pawn has realised its dreams!) **27...♔g7 28 ♕f4 ♕e8**

The queen must return: 28...♕a2? 29 ♘f5+ with mate in five – 29...gxf5 30 ♕g5+ etc.

29 ♕e5

Serious consideration should have been given to 29 ♕c7+!? ♔g8 30 ♕e5, avoiding the following complicated variations, for example: 30...♕e7 (30...♔g7 31 ♗a3 h6 32 ♕c7+ and ♗e7!) 31 ♗a3! ♕xa3 32 ♕xf6 ♕f8 33 ♕e5 ♕e7 34 ♕xd5 b5 35 ♘e4 and wins.



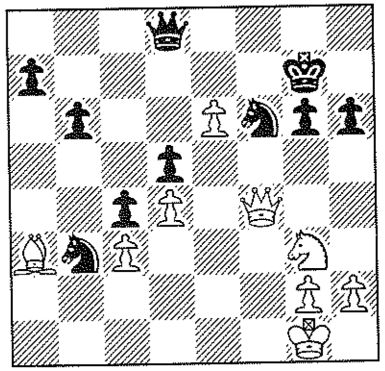
The culmination of this historic battle. Which of the sleeping pieces on the 'forgotten' flank will wake up sooner – the black knight at b3 or the white bishop at b2?

29...♕e7?

'Black falls in with White's intentions, but all the same ...♕e7 was unavoidable. For example, after 29...♘a5 30 ♗c1! with the threat of 31 ♗h6+ (or 31 ♕c7+ followed by 32 ♗h6) Black is forced to play 30...♕e7, and then White can carry out the same combination as in the game.' (Botvinnik) But Goldin pointed out the only defence – 29...h6! Here is his 1988 analysis:

1) 30 h4 ♘a5! 31 ♗c1! ♕e7 32 ♗g5! hxg5! (if 32...♘c6 33 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 34 ♕xd5 ♕xh4 35 ♕d7+ ♘e7 36 d5 ♔f6 37 d6 ♕xg3 38 ♕xe7+ ♔e5 White wins by 39 ♕g7+!) 33 hxg5 ♘c6 34 gxf6+ ♕xf6 35 ♕xd5 ♘e7! (35...♘d8? 36 ♕d7+) 36 ♕d7 (36 ♕xc4 ♕f4! 37 ♘e2 ♕f5 with equality) 36...♕g5! 37 ♘f1 (or 37 d5 ♕e3+ 38 ♔f1 ♕f4+ 39 ♔e2 ♕e5+) 37...♔f6 38 ♕xa7 b5 39 ♕d7 ♕d5 with a draw;

2) 30 ♗a3 ♕d8 31 ♕f4! (31 h4 ♘a5! 32 h5 ♘c6 with a solid enough position)

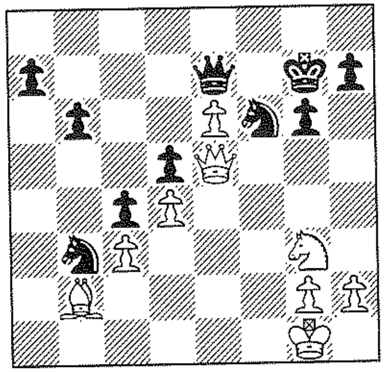


Analysis diagram

31...b5 (31...♘a5?! 32 ♗c1!; 31...♕c8? 32 ♕d6!) 32 h4 a5 33 ♕e5! b4 34 cxb4 c3 35 b5! c2 36 ♘e2 ♘d2! 37 b6 ♘c4 38 ♕c7+ *(the computer also suggests 38 ♕f4!? ♘xb6 39 ♗c1 ♔g8 40 ♕xb6 ♕e8 41 ♘f4 ♘c4 42 ♕g5 ♘e4 43 ♕xd5 ♘ed6 44 ♕g5 with an obvious advantage – G.K.)* 38...♕xc7 39 bxc7 ♘b6 40 ♘c3! ♘c8! (40...g5 41 h5! ♘xh5 42 ♘xd5 and wins) 41 ♔f2 (41 g4 ♘xg4 42 ♘xd5 ♘f6 43 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 44 d5 ♔e5 45 e7 ♘xe7 46 d6 c1♕+ 47 ♗xc1 ♔xd6 48 ♗a3+ ♔xc7 49 ♗xe7 ♔d7 50 ♗f8 ♔e6 51 ♗xh6 ♔f5 52 ♔f2 ♔g4 53 ♗g5 a4 with a draw) 41...g5 42 h5!? *(42 hxg5 hxg5 43 ♔e2 ♔g6 44 ♔d2 ♔f5 45 e7 ♔e6 46 ♔xc2 ♔d7 47 ♗c5 ♔c6 48 ♔b3 ♘e8 49 ♔a4 ♘xc7 50 ♘b5 ♘e8 51 ♔xa5 ♔d7 with a draw – G.K.)* 42...♘xh5 43 ♘xd5 ♔g6 44 ♔e3 ♘g7 45 e7 ♔f7 46 ♔d2 ♘e8 47 ♔xc2 ♔e6, 'and Black picks up the c7-pawn.'

However, the 'human and machine' tandem immediately refutes 46...♘e8? by 47 ♗c5! ♔e6 48 ♘b6 ♘xb6 49 ♗xb6 ♔d7 50 ♗xa5 h5 51 ♔xc2 h4 52 ♔d3 g4 53 ♔e2. There only remains 46...♔e6, but here too things are not easy for Black: 47 ♘e3 ♘e8 48 d5+ ♔d7 49 ♘c4 ♔xc7 50 d6+ ♘exd6 51 ♗xd6+ ♔d7 52 ♔xc2 ♘xd6 53 ♘xd6 ♔xe7 54 ♘f5+ ♔f6 55 ♘xh6 ♔g6 56 ♘g4 ♔f5 57 ♘e3+ ♔e4 58 ♘f1 a4 59 ♔c3 a3 60 ♔b3 ♔d3 61 ♘g3 ♔e3 62 ♘h5, saving the g-pawn and winning.

All the same, 29...h6! would have made it extremely difficult to win and 29...♕e7? was a fatal mistake, allowing a grandiose combination. White creates, in the words of Levenfish, 'an artistic work of the highest rank, which will be found in chess manuals for decades to come.'



30 ♗a3!!

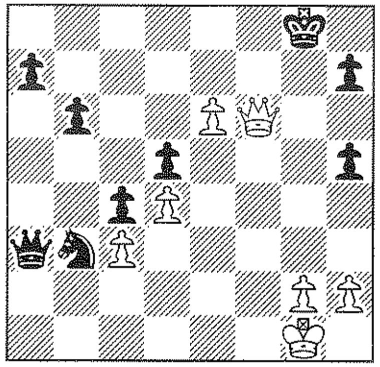
Diversion! Whereas the first little step by this bishop (12 ♗b2?!) was merely an unsuccessful joke, the second gives rise to a genuine drama. The kamikaze bishop forces the black queen to abandon its king to its fate and open the way for the lucky e-pawn.

It is amusing that, during the World Olympiad in 1954 in Amsterdam, this famous position was depicted on... an enormous cake, displayed in the window of one of the central confectionery shops.

30...♕xa3 (30...♕e8 31 ♕c7+ ♔g8 32 ♗e7 ♘g4 33 ♕d7 etc.) **31 ♘h5+! gxh5**

Or 31...♔h6 32 ♘xf6 ♕c1+ 33 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 34 ♔g3 ♕xc3+ 35 ♔h4 ♕xd4+ 36 ♘g4+!

32 ♕g5+ ♔f8 33 ♕xf6+ ♔g8



'I sit and consider the most accurate move order,' recalled Mikhail Moiseevich. 'Outwardly Capablanca maintains his composure, walking about on the stage. Euwe comes up to him: "How's it going?" With his hands Capa expressively indicates that everything is still possible, obviously hoping that I am observing this conversation. The brilliant practical player was exploiting his last psychological chance: he was trying to suggest to his tired opponent that the position was unclear – suppose that through excitement there should follow some chance mistake?'

34 e7

Also sufficient was 34 ♕f7+ ♔h8 35 g3! (the king hides at h3), but not 35 e7? ♕c1+ 36 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 37 ♔g3 ♕g5+ 38 ♔f3 ♘xd4+! 39 cxd4 ♕g4+ with perpetual check.

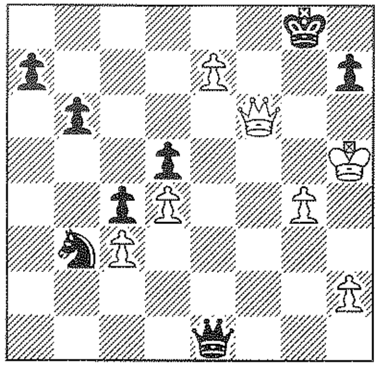
34...♕c1+ 35 ♔f2 ♕c2+ 36 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 37 ♔h4 ♕e4+

'Capa replied instantly – so that I should be aware of my opponent's confidence in a favourable outcome to the game. By keeping his queen at c2, d3 and e4, he was hoping that in time-trouble White would avoid the exchange of queens and agree to perpetual check.' (Botvinnik)

38 ♔xh5 ♕e2+

38...♕g6+ also fails to save Black in view of 39 ♕xg6+ hxg6+ 40 ♔xg6 and 41 e8♕ mate.

39 ♔h4 ♕e4+ 40 g4 (simpler than 40 ♔h3) **40...♕e1+ 41 ♔h5 1-0**



There are no more checks, and Black resigned. The crippled knight at b3 is a silent reproach for his plan begun in the early middlegame. The hall exploded with applause – a rare occurrence: usually it was only Euwe that the Dutch public acclaimed in this way...

'After my wins over Alekhine and Capablanca,' Botvinnik recalls, 'I ventured to enter into negotiations about a match for the world championship. Our conversation took place over a cup of tea in the presence of Flohr in the Amsterdam Carlton Hotel, where Alekhine was living separately (to avoid meeting Capablanca). Alekhine gave his agreement in principle to play in Moscow... In January 1939 the Soviet Government gave permission for the organisation and financing of this match, and correspondence with Alekhine began...'

The persistent challenger learned of this decision by the authorities from a government telegram: 'If you decide to challenge chess player Alekhine to a match, we wish you complete success. The rest is not difficult to provide. Molotov.' Many years later Botvinnik stated that he had accidentally pronounced the telegram with a Caucasian accent and realised that it had most probably been dictated by Stalin...

All plans were upset by the Second World War. The dream of winning the chess crown was postponed for many long, difficult years.

'Friend Paul'

Thus the AVRO tournament had shown that Botvinnik's strategic mastery was already at the level of the great geniuses of the old guard. However, first place went to another rising star – the young Estonian grandmaster Paul Keres, who finished ahead of Fine on tie-break and also defeated him in one of their individual games.

This success of Paul Petrovich Keres (1916-1975) was the most brilliant in his career: three wins, 11 draws, not a single defeat and practically without any dubious positions – undoubtedly an outstanding result. The press fully appreciated Keres's combinative talent, christening him 'the Northern chess wonder' and 'the new Morphy'.

His convincing win over Capablanca, along with the wins by Fine over Alekhine and the masterpieces by Botvinnik given above, marked the arrival of a new generation in chess. Previously Capa had never been defeated like that!

Game 38
P.Keres-J.R.Capablanca
AVRO Tournament,
Holland 1938, 6th round
French Defence C09

1 e4 e6

It is interesting that in this tournament Capablanca only employed the French, not venturing the favourite move of his youth – 1...e5. However, that was probably the best practical choice: a little later Capa twice played this against Keres (Buenos Aires Olympiad and Margate 1939) and each time gained a draw in the Ruy Lopez.

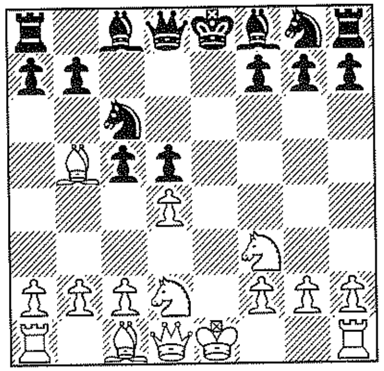
2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2

Tarrasch's flexible plan, later developed by Geller and Karpov, but at that time little-studied. Nimzowitsch preferred 3 e5 (*Volume 1, Game No.92*). But the main move was and remained 3 ♘c3, for example: 3...♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 ♗d2 (5 a3!) 5...cxd4? (5...♘e7! – *Volume 1, Game No.136*) 6 ♘b5 ♗xd2+ 7 ♕xd2 ♘c6 8 ♘f3 (8 f4!?) 8...f6 9 ♕f4 ♘h6 10 ♘d6+ ♔f8 11 ♗b5 and with some difficulty Black squeezed a draw (Fine-Capablanca, 3rd round).

3...c5

In the ninth round Alekhine defeated Capablanca after 3...♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♗d3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 ♘e2 ♕b6 8 ♘f3 (*Volume 1, Game No.147*).

4 exd5 exd5 (the variation with 4...♕xd5 had not yet been devised) **5 ♘gf3 ♘c6 6 ♗b5**



6...♕e7+?!

A rare move, which was introduced in the game Panov-Bondarevsky (10th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1937).

'This check is equivalent to an offer of a draw: 7 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ etc., but that day White was in an aggressive mood. 6...♗d6 7 0-0 ♘ge7 is better.' (Keres) After 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 ♘b3 ♗d6! (if 9...♗b6 10 ♖e1! and ♗e3 Black has no compensation for the weakness of his 'isolani'; Botvinnik's plan 10 ♗e3 ♗xe3 11 ♗xc6+ bxc6 12 fxe3 is less clear) 10 ♖e1 0-0 11 ♗g5 the main *tabiya* of the variation arises. I might mention, for example, the games Karpov-Korchnoi (Moscow 18th matchgame 1974) and Kasparov-Bareev (World Cup rapidplay, Cannes 2001). Black's position is slightly worse, but his opponent does not have anything special.

7 ♗e2! cxd4

Bondarevsky's continuation 7...♕c7 8 0-0 ♘f6 is more logical – later Bronstein and Korchnoi gained draws in this way.

8 0-0 ♕c7

8...♕d8 9 ♘b3 ♗d6 10 ♘bxd4 ♘ge7 (Geller-Spassky, Sukhumi 7th matchgame 1968) is hardly any better. White simply has an advantage for free – a more favourable version of the usual French positions with an isolated d5-pawn (the bishop on e2 parries the possible pin on the knight after ...♗g4). Both 11 ♗g5 and 11 ♖e1 (Geller) are good here, as well as 11 b3 0-0 12 ♗b2 ♘g6 13 c4 (Tal).

9 ♘b3 ♗d6?!

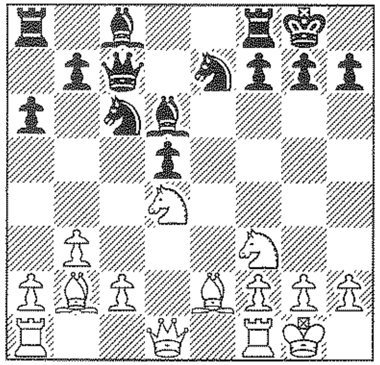
Capa plays altogether too simply. It was essential to play 9...♘f6 10 ♘bxd4 a6 (10...♗e7!? Petrosian) 11 ♖e1 ♗e7 with a slightly inferior, but solid position, for example: 12 ♗g5 0-0 13 ♗d3 h6 14 ♗h4 ♗g4 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♘xf3 ♖fe8 17 c3 ♖ad8 18 ♖e3 ½-½ (Peregudov-Balashov, Tomsk 1997).

10 ♘bxd4 a6 11 b3

'11 c4! came into consideration, in order after 11...dxc4 12 ♗xc4 to open up the position and increase the significance of White's lead in development.' (Keres) Since 11...♘f6? is also bad due to 12 ♗g5! ♘e4 13 cxd5 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♘xg5 15 ♕xg7! ♘xf3+ 16 ♗xf3 ♖f8 17 ♖ac1! ♗xh2+ 18 ♔h1 ♕d6 19 g3 ♗xg3 20 fxg3 ♗f5 21 ♖fe1+ with a spectacular rout (Tal-A.Zaitsev, 37th USSR Championship, Moscow 1969), Black is therefore forced to go in for 11...♘ge7 12 cxd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘xc6 (13 ♗c4!?) 13...bxc6.

11...♘ge7 12 ♗b2 (12 ♘xc6!? bxc6 13 ♗b2) **12...0-0**

'If 12...♘e5 White retains the better game by 13 ♕d2 0-0 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 f4 ♗d6 16 ♗d3.' (Keres) Thus, although after 11 b3 White's offensive develops more slowly, all the same Black's prospects are poor.



13 ♘xc6!

I think that this exchange was unexpected for Capa, and in general he found his opponent's manner of play not very understandable and not very pleasant, and the opening set-up was one to which he was not accustomed. Now instead of the 'isolani' at d5, Black is saddled with weaknesses at a6 and c6.

13...bxc6 (13...♘xc6? 14 ♕xd5) **14 c4! ♗e6?!**

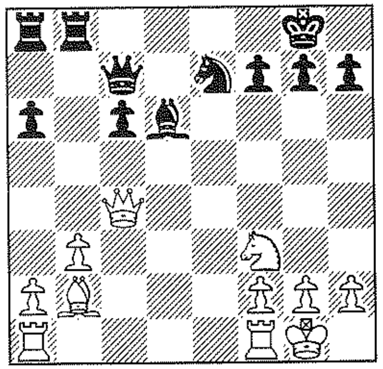
Too passive. Better defensive chances were offered by 14...♖d8 (but not 14...♗g4? 15 ♕d4 and wins) 15 cxd5 (15 ♕d4 ♘f5 16 ♕c3 d4 with equality) 15...♘xd5 (if 15...cxd5 there is the promising reply 16 ♗d3, but not 16 ♖e1 ♗f5 17 ♗d3 ♗e4!) 16 ♕d4 ♗f8 17 ♖fe1 ♘f4 18 ♕e4 ♘xe2+ 19 ♖xe2 ♖d5.

15 ♕c2 dxc4

'This exchange is practically forced: along with 16 ♕c3 and 16 ♘g5 Black has to reckon with the positional threat of 16 c5 ♗f4 17 g3 ♗h6 18 ♗e5 followed by ♘d4.' (Keres) And indeed, both 15...h6?! 16 c5 ♗f4 17 g3 and, say, 15...♗g4?! 16 cxd5 ♗xf3 17 ♗xf3 ♗xh2+ 18 ♔h1 cxd5 19 ♕xc7 ♗xc7 20 ♗a3 ♖fe8 21 ♖ae1 etc. are bad.

The defence proved to be far more difficult than Capablanca imagined, and in desperation he devised the plan of playing his rook to the fifth rank. However, after conceding the centre, Black's position deteriorates with every move: White, with the more active pieces, presses not only on the weak a6- and c6-pawns, but also on f7 and g7.

16 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 (or 16...♗d5 17 ♕c3 f6 18 ♖ac1 ♕b6 19 ♕c2 ♖ad8 20 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 21 ♘d4 etc.) **17 ♕xc4 ♖fb8**



18 h3

'This loss of time allows Black to regroup his pieces. Very strong was 18 ♕c3, forcing the weakening move 18...f6, since 18...♘f5? leads to loss of material after 19 g4! ♗b4 20 ♕e5 ♕xe5 21 ♗xe5 ♘d6 22 a3 ♗c5 23 b4. Also good was 18 ♖fd1, creating various tactical chances, or 18 g3, depriving the black pieces of the f4-square.' (Keres)

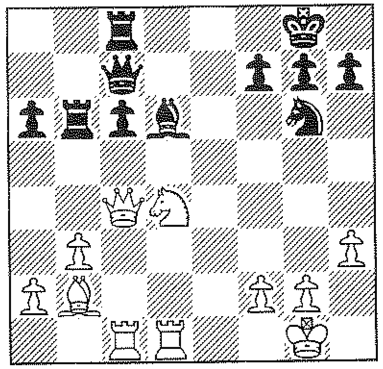
But in my view, there is no great difference between all these moves – in particular, because playing ...♗f4 does not solve Black's problems.

18...♖b5 (if 18...♘d5, then 19 ♖ac1 ♗f4 20 ♖c2 ♘b4 21 ♖e2 or 19 ♖ad1!?) **19 ♖ac1 ♖c8 20 ♖fd1 ♘g6**

Opening the way for the bishop to f8, from where it will defend the g7-pawn. Unsuitable was 20...♗f4 21 ♖c2 ♘d5 22 ♘d4 ♖b6 23 ♘xc6! etc.

21 ♘d4! ♖b6

'Only here, apparently, did Capablanca notice that 21...♖d5 does not work because of 22 ♘xc6! (22 ♕xa6 ♗e5! with excellent counterplay) 22...♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♕xc6 24 ♖xd6!, retaining the extra pawn with a superior position. The move in the game is the only reply that enables Black to avoid loss of material, but now White begins a dangerous attack on the king.' (Keres)



22 ♘e6!

A spectacular and, apparently, decisive blow. Black cannot play 22...♗h2+ (22...fxe6? 23 ♕xe6+ and ♖xd6) 23 ♔h1 fxe6? (23...♕b8 24 ♘c5!) 24 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 25 ♖d7 and White wins.

22...♕b8!

'This good defensive move was made by Capablanca almost without thinking. He had obviously prepared it beforehand. The main idea of the defence is the variation 23 ♘xg7 ♗e5!, and White has problems with his knight on g7. Therefore he is forced to play 24 ♗xe5!, but the endgame arising after 24...♘xe5 (*24...♕xe5 25 ♕g4! – G.K.*) 25 ♕c3 ♔xg7 26 f4 ♖b5 (*no better is 26...♖e8 27 ♖e1 f6 28 fxe5 ♖xe5 29 ♕g3+ ♔f7 30 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 31 ♕f2 – G.K.*) gives Black good drawing chances.' (Keres)

However, in my view this is not so: after both 27 ♖e1 f6 28 fxe5 ♖xe5 29 ♕c4 and 27 fxe5 ♕xe5 28 ♖d4 ♔g8 29 ♖e1 ♕c5 30 ♕g3+ ♔f8 31 ♕f2 Black comes under a strong attack and is close to defeat. Incidentally, after 23 ♘xg7!? it is even worse to include 23...♗h2+ 24 ♔h1 ♗e5 in view of 25 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♕c3 ♔xg7 27 f4 ♖e8 28 ♖e1 f6 29 fxe5 ♖xe5 30 ♕g3+ ♔f7 31 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 32 ♕f2 ♕c7 33 ♖c4 and wins.

23 ♘g5?!

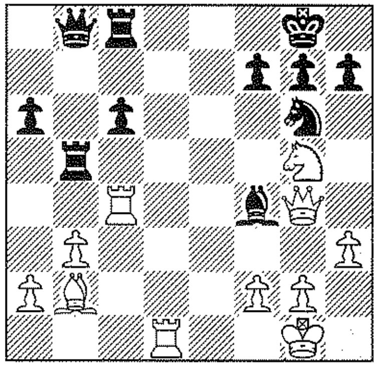
A questionable decision – playing for an attack. If Keres was afraid of squandering his advantage, he could have made the positional move 23 ♘c5!? After the forced 23...♗xc5 24 ♕xc5 White has an overwhelming advantage.

23...♖b7 24 ♕g4 ♗f4 (this is where it tells that White has not played g2-g3) **25 ♖c4**

It is inaccurate to play 25 ♖c5 ♖e7 26 g3 ♗xg5 27 ♕xg5 ♖ce8.

25...♖b5?

A serious mistake. Keres suggested the 'unenviable' 25...♗xg5 26 ♕xg5, but the most tenacious is the 'computer move' 25...♖e7!, for example: 26 ♘xh7 ♗h2+ 27 ♔h1 ♔xh7 28 g3 ♗xg3 29 fxg3 ♖e3 30 ♗d4 (30 ♔g2 ♖ce8 31 ♖f1 ♕d6 is unclear) 30...♖xg3 31 ♕h5+ ♔g8 32 ♗f2 ♖e8 33 ♗xg3 ♕xg3 with sufficient compensation for a draw, or 26 g3 ♗xg5 27 ♕xg5 ♕b5 28 ♕xb5 (28 ♕c1 ♖c2; 28 ♕g4 ♖ce8 29 h4 ♖e2 30 ♗a1 h5) 28...axb5 29 ♖c2 – White is better, but the win is problematic.



26 ♘xf7

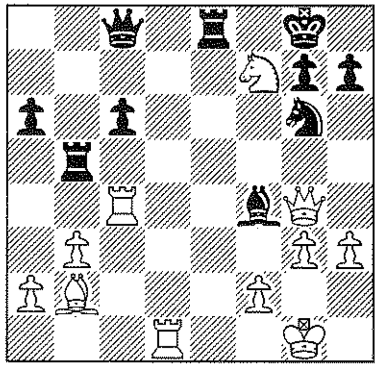
'With both players in time-trouble, White takes his formidable opponent 'at his word' and does not analyse to the end the combination with 26 ♖xf4! ♖xg5 (it is hopeless to play 26...♘xf4 27 ♘xf7 ♘g6 28 ♘h6+ ♔h8 29 ♖d7 or 26...h5 27 ♕d7) 27 ♕xg5 ♕xf4 (or 27...h6 28 ♕f5 ♘xf4 29 ♗e5 etc.) 28 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 29 ♕xd8+ ♘f8 30 ♗a3 c5. Here I stopped my calculation, on seeing that 31 ♗xc5 does not work because of 31...♕c1+, and not noticing 31 ♕c8!, after which Black no longer has any defence against ♗xc5.' (Keres)

26...♖e8 (of course, not 26...♔xf7 27 ♖d7+ and not 26...♖f8 27 ♘d6) **27 g3**

27 ♘d8!? ♖xd8 28 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 29 ♖xf4 was perhaps simpler.

27...♕c8?

'In view of the time-trouble, Black should have exploited his last chance – 27...♗xg3.' (Keres) But after 28 ♕xg3 (28 fxg3 is also possible) 28...♕xg3+ 29 fxg3 ♔xf7 30 ♖f1+ ♔g8 31 ♖xc6 this undoubtedly best chance proves to be an illusion.



28 ♖xf4 ('just the same', only with two extra pawns; the alternative was 28 ♖d7) **28...♕xg4 29 ♖xg4 ♔xf7 30 ♖d7+ ♖e7 31 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7**

'To save such a position, even Capablanca's skill is insufficient.' (Keres)

32 ♗xg7 ♖a5 33 a4 ♖c5 34 ♖b4 ♔e6 35 ♔g2 h5 36 ♖c4 ♖xc4 37 bxc4 ♔d6 38 f4 1-0

A splendid win!

In the next round, the seventh, with the black pieces, Keres defeated the leader – Fine, who at that point had 4½ out of 5 with one adjourned game (also later won) with Alekhine. Many years later Paul Petrovich called the game with Fine the most important in his chess career. And indeed, he then drew all seven games in the second cycle, and this proved sufficient to become winner of the AVRO tournament!

Although Botvinnik, who finished third, made a serious claim with his stunning wins over Alekhine and Capablanca, Keres's play also made a great impression. 'Paul's right to play a match with world champion Alekhine became obvious,' Mikhail Moiseevich admitted nearly 40 years later. 'After the tournament Capablanca (dreaming that someone would defeat his chess enemy Alexander Alekhine) took Keres to one side and tried to convince him not to play a match in South America – there Alekhine has many friends...'

Alas, neither Keres, nor Botvinnik, who was successful in discussions, was to play a match with Alekhine. But for many long years to come the rivalry between them was fierce. Without it Botvinnik, by his own admission, would have been unable to advance so far in the field of chess... Whereas Keres, as Tartakower foretold back in 1938, had to be satisfied with the modest role of 'brilliant second' (like McDonnell, Zukertort, Chigorin, Tarrasch or Pillsbury).

A dramatic turn in their relations occurred in the summer of 1940, when Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union. Already in September, Keres, who had endured both the closing of his magazine *Estonian Chess* (1936-40) and the 'nationalisation' of his personal bank account (where his prizes for tournament victories were kept), arrived in Moscow as a participant in the 12th USSR Championship. The tournament gave rise to a new intrigue: who was stronger – Keres or Botvinnik? Or, expressing it in the words of the latter, 'who now, given the changed circumstances, should represent the Soviet Union in a contest for the world championship with Alexander Alekhine?'

The championship did not give an answer to this question: the main contenders drew with each other, but on the whole they disappointed: 1-2. Bondarevsky and Lilienthal, 3. Smyslov, 4. Keres, 5-6. Boleslavsky and Botvinnik. True, the Keres-Petrov game, spectacularly won by White in a King's Gambit, was awarded the main brilliancy prize...

In order to clarify who was who, early in the spring of 1941 Botvinnik's influential patrons arranged an unprecedented four-cycle event of six grandmasters called the 'match-tournament for the title of Absolute USSR Champion' (a kind of prototype of the 1948 match-tournament!).

And again everyone expected that the tournament would reduce to a duel between Keres and Botvinnik. They did indeed occupy the first two places in the tournament table, but the expected race between them did not happen – largely because of the following game, played as early as the third round.

Game 39

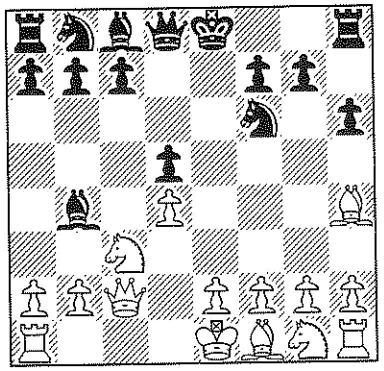
P.Keres-M.Botvinnik

Match-Tournament,
Leningrad/Moscow 1941
Nimzo-Indian Defence E35

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕c2 d5 5 cxd5 exd5

In the 1930s Botvinnik used to employ the popular Alekhine move 5...♕xd5, which also occurred in the Alekhine-Euwe return match (Holland 1937).

6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗h4

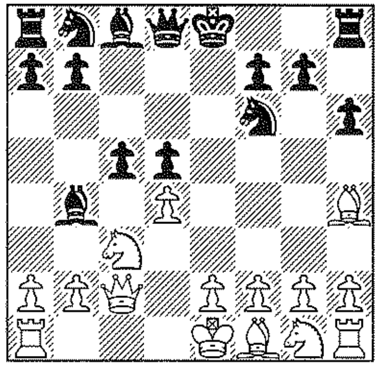


The result of this game removed for a long time the liking for this, objectively best move.

'In desperation' they began playing 7 ♗xf6, but without particular success, for example: 7...♕xf6 8 a3 ♗xc3+ 9 ♕xc3 0-0 10 e3 c6 11 ♘e2?! ♖c8! with equality, and in the end Black won (Petrosian-Botvinnik, Moscow 1st matchgame 1963). However, after 11 ♘f3 White retains a slight initiative, as shown in a number of games of Seirawan.

7...c5!?

Botvinnik follows in the footsteps of his games with Kotov and Mikenas (12th USSR Championship, Moscow 1940). A more passive alternative is 7...g5 8 ♗g3 ♘e4 9 e3 c6?! 10 ♗d3 ♘xg3 11 hxg3 ♗e6 12 a3! (Kasparov-Nikolic, Belgrade 1989).



8 0-0-0?

In the aforementioned game Kotov also responded poorly: 8 e3?! cxd4 9 exd4 ♘c6 10 ♗b5 0-0 11 ♘e2 ♕b6 12 ♕d3 ♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♘e4 14 0-0 ♗f5 with an obvious advantage to Black. Of course, 8 dxc5! should be played. In this way I defeated Korchnoi (Tilburg 1989): 8....0-0 9 e3 ♘bd7 10 ♗d3 ♕a5 11 ♘e2 ♗xc3+ 12 ♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 13 ♘xc3 ♘xc5 14 ♗c2 g5 15 ♗g3 ♗e6 16 f3 a6 17 h4 ♖fc8 18 hxg5 hxg5 19 0-0-0 ♘cd7 20 ♔b1 ♔g7 21 ♗b3 etc. And also after 8...g5!? 9 ♗g3 ♘e4 10 e3 I gained a couple of quite nice wins: 10...♘c6 (10...♕f6?! 11 ♗b5+) 11 ♘f3 ♕f6 12 ♗b5! (Kasparov-Spassky, Linares 1990) or 10...♕a5!? 11 ♘e2! ♗f5 12 ♗e5! (Kasparov-Short, London 9th matchgame 1993) – in both cases White has the initiative.

It is because of my games that 5...exd5 has almost gone out of use, and after Black's success in the game Beliavsky-Romanishin (Groningen 1993) everyone reverted to 5...♕xd5 and after 6 ♘f3 – 6...♕f5!?, while if 6 e3, then 6...c5 (Kasparov-Anand, New York 2nd matchgame 1995).

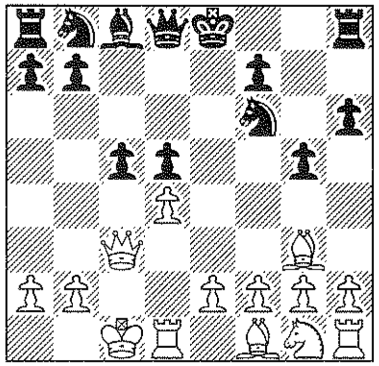
It has to be agreed that the description of the opening in this game demonstrates very strikingly the influence of the champions on chess fashion and the development of theory.

8...♗xc3!

'A significant improvement compared with 8...0-0, which I played against Mikenas.' (Botvinnik) After 9 dxc5 ♗xc3 10 ♕xc3 g5 11 ♗g3 ♘e4 12 ♕a3 ♗e6 13 f3 ♘xg3 14 hxg3 ♕f6 15 e3 ♖c8 16 ♔b1 ♘d7 17 ♘e2 ♖xc5 (or 17...♘xc5 18 ♘d4 ♗f5+ 19 ♔a1 ♗h7 20 ♗e2 with a slight advantage to White) 18 ♘d4 a6 19 ♗b5! ♖ac8 20 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 Black had an unpleasant position.

9 ♕xc3 (9 ♗xf6 is unfavourable, not because of 9...♕xf6 10 ♕xc3 ♘c6, but in view of 9...♗xb2+!? 10 ♔xb2 ♕xf6 11 ♕xc5 ♘c6 with advantage) **9...g5! 10 ♗g3**

It is surprising that Keres went in for this: White's position looks extremely dangerous.



10...cxd4!

A surprise! The game Belavenets-Simagin (Moscow Championship 1941), which had been published in *64*, went 10...♘e4?! and White gained good play. But now he suffers an opening catastrophe.

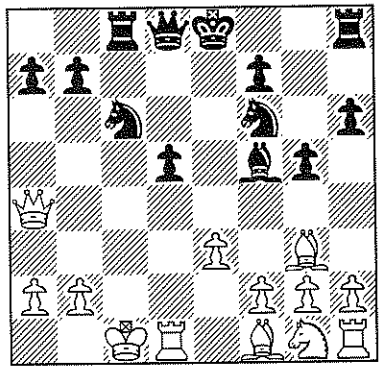
11 ♕xd4

Also unattractive is 11 ♕a3 ♘c6 12 ♘f3 ♕b6! (12...♗f5?! 13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖c8+ 15 ♔d1 is unclear) 13 e3 (13 ♔b1 ♘e4 with an obvious advantage) 13...♗f5 14 ♗d3 ♘e4 (Lukin-Grechkin, correspondence 1961).

11...♘c6 12 ♕a4 ♗f5 13 e3

'The deficiencies of Keres's character tell. He was unable to endure stoically the unpleasant surprise, and he misses an obligatory opportunity to complicate the play: 13 f3 ♕b6 14 e4 dxe4 15 ♔b1, moving his king away from the threats of the enemy pieces.' (Botvinnik) However, after 15...exf3+! (this is better than Fine's recommendation 15...e3+) 16 ♔a1 ♕b4! 17 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 18 ♗b5+ ♔f8 White has a hopeless position in my opinion.

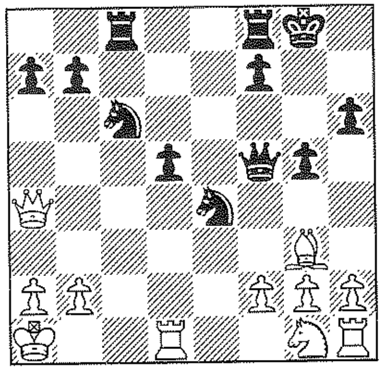
13...♖c8



14 ♗d3?

But this is indeed the decisive mistake. 'Black also gains a material advantage after 14 ♘e2 a6 15 ♘c3 b5 16 ♕xa6 b4 17 ♗b5 ♗d7.' (Botvinnik) But firstly, no one has considered 17 e4! ♗xe4 18 ♗b5 (18 ♘xe4?! ♘b8+ 19 ♔b1 ♘xa6 20 ♘d6+ ♔f8 21 ♗xa6 ♖c6 and wins) 18...0-0 19 ♗xc6 bxc3 20 f3 with some chances of a defence, and secondly, it is stronger to play 15 ♕a3! b5 (15...♘b4+ 16 ♘c3 ♕e7 17 ♔d2! ♗c2 18 ♖c1 is unclear) 16 ♔d2! a5 17 ♖c1 ♘e4+ 18 ♔d1 with an inferior, but quite defensible position. Here it transpires that it is less dangerous to keep the king not in the corner, but in the centre!

14...♕d7! (threatening to move the knight with a discovered check; the rest is easy) **15 ♔b1 ♗xd3+ 16 ♖xd3 ♕f5 17 e4** (too late!) **17...♘xe4 18 ♔a1 0-0!** (but not 18...♘c5?! 19 ♖c3+) **19 ♖d1**



19...b5! (an elegant little mating finish) **20 ♕xb5 ♘d4 21 ♕d3 ♘c2+ 22 ♔b1 ♘b4 0-1**

'I was always underestimated as a master of attack. Keres too was apparently influenced by this widespread opinion.' (Botvinnik)

Such a terrible rout with White at the hands of your main rival could upset anyone. In the end Botvinnik won all the mini-matches in the tournament – 13½ out of 20 (2. Keres – 11; 3. Smyslov – 10; 4. Boleslavsky – 9). In the words of the winner, 'it became clear who should play Alekhine.'

Without wishing to belittle the triumph of the sixth champion, I should nevertheless mention the obvious difference in the social status and psychological state of the two players. Botvinnik enjoyed the whole-hearted support of the authorities and felt perfectly comfortable; back in the 1930s they had presented him with a car and set up a personal stipend – a quite exceptional occurrence for those times. After his failure in the 12th USSR Championship Mikhail Moiseevich complained about the noise in the hall, and the organisers of the match-tournament, to his complete satisfaction, 'achieved quiet by simple means: a keeper of

the peace in police uniform walked up and down the central isle; on one occasion an undisciplined spectator was evicted and fined...'

But what was happening in the heart of the taciturn Keres, one can only guess. According to his biographer Walther Heuer, the grandmaster was experiencing a general depression, caused by the realities of Soviet life. In addition, he was dispirited by the strange tournament regulations: the players were forbidden to exchange even a single word, or to leave the playing hall during a game. This created an oppressive atmosphere, to which a Western European grandmaster was not accustomed...

Two months later Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, and the paths of the two contenders for the chess throne did not cross for more than six years.

Botvinnik was evacuated with his family to the Urals, from where he wrote a letter 'to the top' requesting that he be given free time to study chess. The reply was a resolution by Molotov himself: 'It is essential to maintain comrade Botvinnik's chess ability and to provide the time required for further improvement.' The order was carried out and Mikhail Moiseevich wrote high-quality notes on all the games of the 1941 match-tournament and achieved unconditional victories in the Soviet events of the war period: Sverdlovsk 1943 (+7 =7), Moscow Championship 1943/44 (+11 -1 =3), 13th USSR Championship (+11 -2 =3) and 14th USSR Championship 1945 (+14 =4). After which, having enlisted the support of the highest Soviet authorities, he again sent a challenge to Alekhine (despite the opposition of the then chairman of the chess federation, the NKVD colonel B.Vainstein, who considered a match with Alekhine to be impossible in principle on account of his Nazi collaboration). But when the champion suddenly died in March 1946, Botvinnik immediately warmed to the idea of a match-tournament for the world championship.

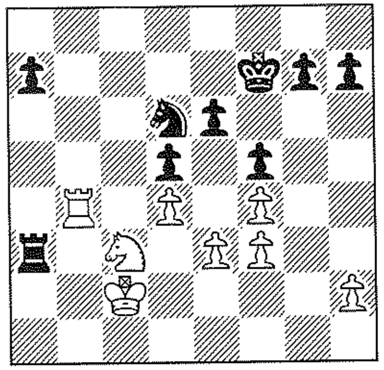
Keres's fate turned out quite differently. He remained with his young wife in his native Tartu and earned a living by playing in German tournaments throughout the war. He met with Alekhine, who in 1943 insistently suggested playing a match for the world championship, several times. Keres declined, although he could well have won. Alekhine even commented heatedly: 'They all want to wait until I'm past 60...' However, according to Keres's biography, the reasons for his declining were quite different: here there was both depression, caused by the war, and also a recognition of the fact that of all the contenders he alone was 'on the wrong side' and under such conditions a match with Alekhine would be compromising.

On one occasion in Spain (by then the Germans were already retreating) Keres asked Alekhine: 'If I return home, will the Russians cut off my head?' Alekhine replied: 'Yes, they will.' Nevertheless at the last possible moment, in the summer of 1944, Paul Petrovich returned to Tallinn – for his wife and two young children, in order to flee together by sea to Sweden. Alas, the long-awaited launches never in fact arrived... In those years many people with a similar biography were shot or they disappeared in Stalin's camps. But Keres was 'only' interrogated by the KGB, prevented from participating in the 14th USSR Championship (1945) and, what was most offensive and humiliating, not allowed to take part in the first major international tournament after the war, Groningen 1946 (1. Botvinnik, 2. Euwe, 3. Smyslov).

It was on this psychological background that the next game between Keres and Botvinnik took place – in the second major post-war tournament, the Chigorin Memorial (Moscow 1947). The position of the leaders at that point was as follows: Botvinnik – 9½ out of 13, Keres – 9, Smyslov, Boleslavsky, Kotov and Ragozin – 8½. 'Flohr advised me to play for a draw with Black, and to win in the last round against Trifunovic, in order to secure victory in the tournament,' writes Botvinnik. 'But I took a different decision. Prior to the event in The Hague it was very important to achieve success in this game, thereby improving my chances in the forthcoming match-tournament for the world championship, where my main rival could only be Keres.'

Strangely enough, Keres played this game uncommonly passively, clearly not aiming for a win, and began to run into difficulties at around the 25-move mark.

Game 40
P.Keres-M.Botvinnik
Chigorin Memorial, Moscow 1947



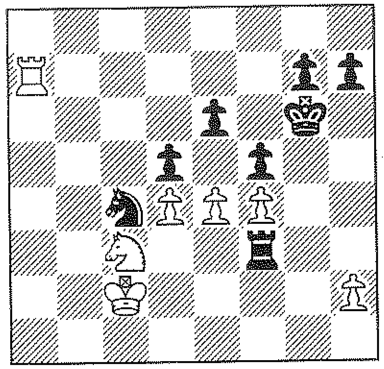
41...♖a1

The sealed move. 'The next day there was a difficult adjournment session in prospect. If White now exchanges rooks, the knight ending should be lost. Knight endings are very similar to pawn endings, and in both cases an outside passed pawn gives good winning chances.' (Botvinnik)

42 ♔d3 ♖e1!

Sacrificing the pride of his position – the outside passed pawn! In Botvinnik's opinion, after 42...♖f1 (or 42...♖h1 43 ♖a4 ♖xh2 44 ♖xa7+ ♔f6 45 ♖a6) 43 ♖a4 ♘c8 (43...♖xf3 44 ♖xa7+ ♔f6 45 ♖a6) 44 ♘b5 ♖xf3 45 ♖a6 'White could probably have saved the game: the activity of his pieces compensates to some extent for his material deficit.' However, in my view, after 45...♖f2 46 ♘c7 ♖xh2 47 ♖xe6 ♖b2! 48 ♖e5 ♘d6 49 ♘xd5 ♖b3+ and ...♖b7 his position is close to being lost: Black does have two passed pawns – on the h- and a-files.

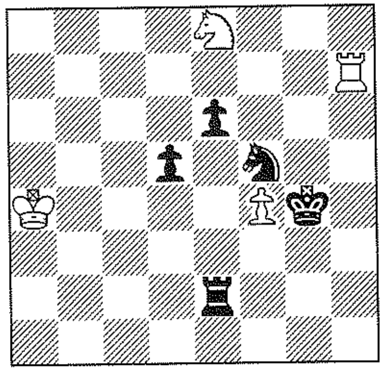
43 ♖a4 ♘c4 44 ♖xa7+ ♔g6 45 e4 ♖e3+ 46 ♔c2 ♖xf3



47 exf5+ (or 47 exd5 ♘e3+ 48 ♔d2 ♘xd5 49 ♘xd5 exd5 50 ♖a6+ ♔h5 51 ♖a7 ♔h6 52 ♖d7 ♖xf4 53 ♖xd5 ♔g5 54 ♔e3 ♖h4 and wins) **47...♔xf5 48 ♖xg7 ♖f2+ 49 ♔b3**

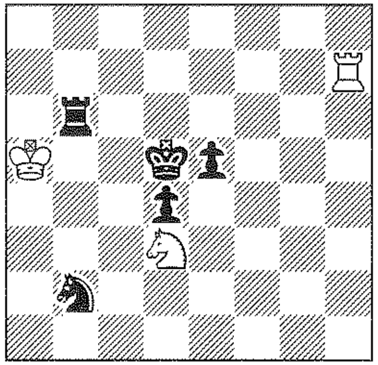
Retreating was even more unpleasant.

49...♖b2+ 50 ♔a4 ♖xh2 51 ♖f7+ ♔g6 52 ♖f8 ♘d6 (52...♖f2!?) **53 ♘b5 ♘f5 54 ♘c7 ♖e2!?** (or 54...♘xd4 55 f5+ exf5 56 ♘xd5 ♖h4 and wins) **55 ♘e8 ♘xd4 56 ♖f6+ ♔h5 57 ♖f7 ♘f5 58 ♖xh7+ ♔g4**



'Now the win is, of course, a matter of technique, but my opponent, understanding the importance of this game, defends with great tenacity.' (Botvinnik) And it is indeed surprising how long Paul Petrovich resists...

59 ♖d7 ♔xf4 60 ♘c7 ♔e5 (the immediate 60...d4! was simpler) **61 ♔b4 ♖c2 62 ♔b3 ♘d4+ 63 ♔b4 ♖c4+ 64 ♔a5 ♘f5 65 ♔b6 d4 66 ♘a6 ♘d6 67 ♘c5 ♔d5 68 ♘d3 e5 69 ♖h7 ♖c6+ 70 ♔a5 ♘c4+ 71 ♔b5 ♖b6+ 72 ♔a4 ♘b2+ 73 ♔a5**



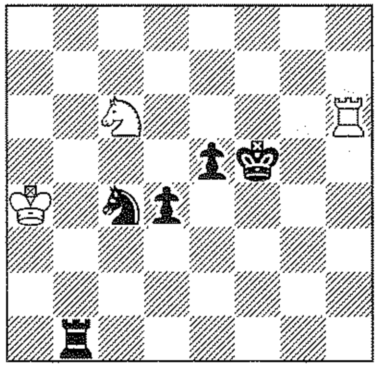
73...♘c4+!

73...♘xd3 74 ♔xb6 e4 would also have won, but with more difficulty: 75 ♖d7+ ♔c4 76 ♖c7+ ♔b3 77 ♖d7 ♔c3 78 ♖c7+ ♔d2 79 ♖d7 ♔e3 80 ♔b5 ♘e5 81 ♖d5 d3 82 ♖xe5 d2 83 ♖d5 ♔e2 and wins.

74 ♔a4 ♖b8

'If 74...♖f6 there would have followed 75 ♖c7!, whereas now this is bad because of 75...♘b2+.' (Botvinnik) Here there is some kind of oversight: after 74...♖f6 75 ♖c7 Black wins by 75...♔e4!

75 ♘b4+ (75 ♖c7? ♘b2+) **75...♔e6 76 ♘c6 ♘b2+ 77 ♔a3 ♘c4+ 78 ♔a4 ♖b1 79 ♖h6+ ♔f5**



80 ♘b4 0-1

Sealed. Playing for stalemate would not have worked: 80 ♘xd4+ exd4 81 ♖f6+ (or 81 ♖h5+ ♔e6 82 ♖h6+ ♔d5) 81...♔e5 82 ♖f5+ ♔e6 83 ♖f6+ ♔d5 and wins.

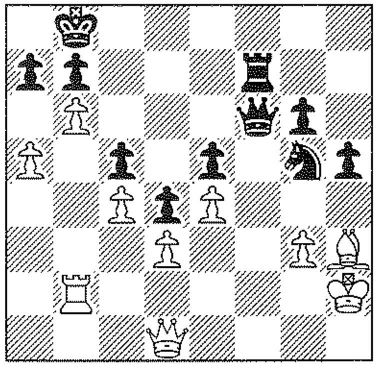
After 80 ♘b4 Black had prepared 80...e4 81 ♖h5+ ♔g4 82 ♖c5 ♘b2+ 83 ♔a3 ♘d3 84 ♘xd3 exd3 85 ♖d5 ♔f3. Without resuming the game a second time, White resigned.

Then they met in The Hague, in the fifth round of the world championship match-tournament. Botvinnik was leading with 2½ out of 3, with Keres half a point behind.

'After our previous game Paul, of course, could not feel relaxed; I therefore aimed for a complicated battle... It need hardly be said how much anxiety this game caused. Everyone considered Paul and I to be the main contenders for victory in the tournament. The game was adjourned with an advantage to me, but also with the possibility of counterplay for my opponent.' (Botvinnik)

To be honest, at the time of my matches with Karpov such positions were evaluated far more concretely, somewhere between 'clear advantage to Black' and 'Black wins'. And not to win such an adjourned position would have been tantamount to a catastrophe.

Game 41
P.Keres-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match-Tournament, The Hague/Moscow 1948

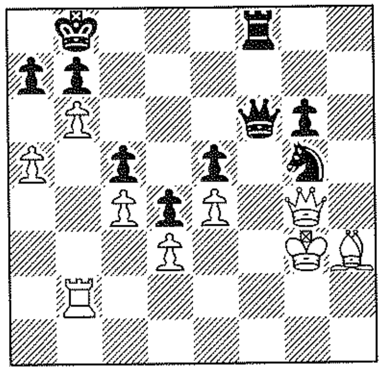


41...h4! 42 ♕g4! hxg3+ 43 ♔xg3 (but not 43 ♕xg3? ♖h7) **43...♖f8!**

An idea of Flohr, Botvinnik's second assistant (the first was Ragozin).

In their adjournment analysis they also considered 43...♘xh3 44 ♕xh3, but it transpired that after 44...♕f4+ 45 ♔g2 ♕f1+ (45...g5 46 ♕h6) 46 ♔h2 ♖f2+ 47 ♖xf2 ♕xf2+ 48 ♔h1 ♕e1+ 49 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 50 ♔h1 ♕h5 51 ♔g2 the pawn endgame is not won: 51...♕xh3+ 52 ♔xh3 axb6 53 axb6 ♔c8 54 ♔g4 ♔d7 55 ♔g5 ♔c6 56 ♔xg6 ♔xb6 57 ♔f5 (57...♔c6 58 ♔xe5 b5 59 cxb5+ ♔xb5 60 ♔d5 ♔b4 61 e5 c4 with a draw).

'I also had to reject the rook ending – 44...♕f3+ 45 ♔h2 ♕xh3+ 46 ♔xh3 ♖f3+ 47 ♔g4 ♖xd3 in view of 48 ♖h2 (*48 ♔g5!? – G.K.*) 48...axb6 49 axb6 ♔c8 50 ♖h7 ♖e3 51 ♔g5.' (Botvinnik) But in fact after 51...♖b3! it would appear that Black wins: 52 ♖c7+ ♔d8 53 ♖xc5 ♖xb6 54 ♖xe5 ♖d6 55 ♖b5 d3 56 ♖b1 d2 57 ♖d1 ♔e7.



44 bxa7+ (44 ♕d7 ♕f4+ 45 ♔g2 a6 or 44 ♗g2 ♘e6 45 ♗h3 ♘f4 46 ♕d7 ♘e2+ 47 ♖xe2 ♕f3+ is bad for White) **44...♔xa7 45 a6**

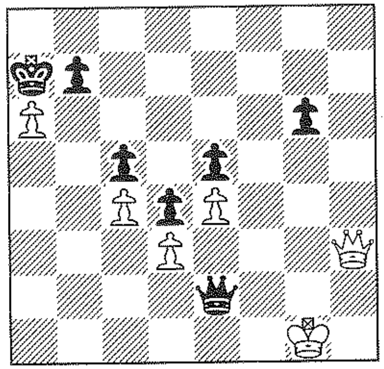
There is no perpetual check after 45 ♖xb7+? ♔xb7 46 ♕d7+ ♔b8 47 ♕b5+ ♔a8.

45...♘xh3 46 ♕xh3

Forced: if 46 ♔xh3 (46 ♖xb7+? ♔xa6), then 46...♕f1+ 47 ♔h2 ♖h8+ 48 ♔g3 ♕g1+ 49 ♖g2 ♕e3+ 50 ♕f3 ♖h3+.

46...♕f4+ 47 ♔g2 ♕f1+ 48 ♔h2 ♖f2+ 49 ♖xf2 ♕xf2+ 50 ♔h1 ♕e1+ 51 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 52 ♔g1

Or 52 ♔h1 ♕h5!



52...♕e3+ 53 ♕xe3 dxe3 54 axb7 ♔xb7 55 ♔g2 ♔b6 56 ♔f3 ♔a5 57 ♔xe3 ♔b4 58 ♔d2 g5 0-1

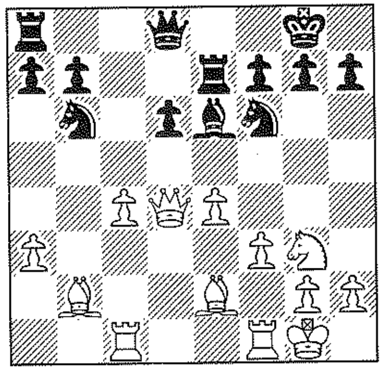
The outside passed pawn decides (58...♔b3 59 d4 ♔xc4 60 dxe5 ♔b5! 61 e6 ♔c6 62 e5 ♔c7 was also possible).

Before their meeting in the second cycle Botvinnik had 5 out of 7, and Keres and Reshevsky 4. At this crucial moment Keres again, as in 1941, suffered an opening catastrophe.

Game 42

M.Botvinnik-P.Keres

World Championship Match-Tournament,
The Hague/Moscow 1948

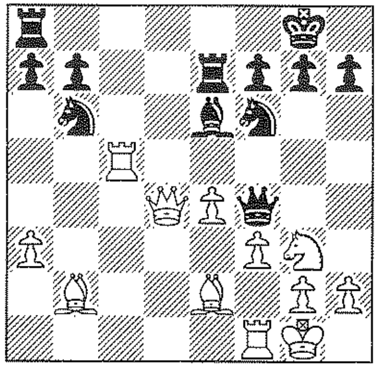


16...♕c7?

Allowing a decisive breakthrough. 'Here Black misses his last opportunity to prolong the resistance: 16...♖c8 17 ♖fd1 ♕c7 (18 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 19 ♖xd6 ♘e8 20 ♖d4 ♖ec7).' (Botvinnik)

17 c5! dxc5 18 ♖xc5 ♕f4?

It was more tenacious to play 18...♕d8 19 ♕e3 (19 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♘h5 f5!) 19...♘fd7, avoiding an immediate rout.



19 ♗c1! ♕b8 (or 19...♖d7 20 ♕b4 ♕b8 21 ♗b5) **20 ♖g5 ♘bd7** (20...♘e8 21 ♘h5 f6 22 ♘xf6+ with an extra pawn and an attack) **21 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22 ♘h5+ ♔g6** (22...♔f8 23 ♘xf6) **23 ♕e3! 1-0**

'After this second defeat in the match-tournament it became clear that Paul could no longer hope to win the event.' (Botvinnik) The final picture took shape slightly later, in the third cycle. Before their next meeting Botvinnik was leading (8 out of 11), Keres was second (6½), and everything could still change, if Paul Petrovich were to win this 'White' game. But he again lost, as he also did in the fourth cycle (4-0 at the top level is something that is not often seen!). And it was only in the fifth cycle, when Botvinnik had already secured the title of world champion, that Keres was able to score a 'consolation goal'.

This crushing score gave rise to numerous rumours and suggestions. Typical of these is the statement of the English historian Leonard Barden: 'It would appear that, for his return to chess, Keres paid the price of giving an undertaking to the Soviet authorities that he would not interfere in Botvinnik's battle for the world championship.' However, the grandmaster's widow Maria and his biographer Walther Heuer reject the existence of any such arrangements...

Three years later Mikhail Moiseevich had a narrow escape against his eternal opponent in the 19th USSR Championship (Moscow 1951), and he then defeated him in a crucial game in the 20th (Moscow 1952). By that time Keres had already won the Soviet Championship three times (1947, 1950 and 1951) and the current world champion decided to put him in his place.

Game 43

M.Botvinnik-P.Keres

USSR Championship, Moscow 1952
Queen's Gambit Declinded D36

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5

'This move causes Black the greatest problems, since now all that he can contemplate is a tenacious defence, whereas White has an enduring initiative.' (Botvinnik) Mikhail Moiseevich had an obvious attachment to the 'Carlsbad'. As I have too, incidentally: in these positions I have an almost one hundred per cent score.

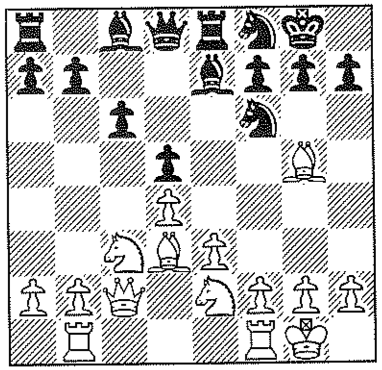
4...exd5 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♗d3 ♘bd7 8 ♕c2 ♖e8 9 ♘ge2 ♘f8 10 0-0

'This continuation was unusual for that time. After ♘g1-f3 White normally used to castle on the kingside, whereas when he played ♘g1-e2 he would castle queenside. But in the present game a 'hybrid' variation has been employed, with the aim of making it difficult for the opponent to choose a plan. After White's kingside castling it is harder for Black to obtain active play, in which Keres always felt confident.' (Botvinnik)

10...c6 11 ♖ab1

The game Kasparov-Andersson (Belfort

1988) went 11 f3 ♗e6!? 12 ♖ae1 ♖c8 13 ♔h1 ♘6d7 14 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 15 ♘f4 ♖c7?! (it is better to play 15...♘f6 16 ♕d2 ♖d7 17 b4) 16 ♕f2 ♘f6 (16...♘b6 17 ♗b1!?) 17 e4 dxe4 18 fxe4 ♖cd7 19 d5! cxd5 20 ♗b5! ♖c7 21 exd5 ♗d7! 22 ♗c2! ♖c8 23 ♕xa7 b6 24 ♕a6 ♘e4? 25 d6! ♘xd6 26 ♘fd5 ♖e5 27 ♕xb6 and White won.



11...♗d6?

A serious positional mistake (Black was tempted by the threat of 12...♗xh2+). 11...♘g4 was correct, and 11...♗g4!? also deserved some consideration.

12 ♔h1 ♘g6 13 f3!

A change of plan: away with the minority attack, long live the breakthrough in the centre! 'Black can no longer prevent e3-e4, since in the given position it is hard for him to counter with ...c6-c5.' (Botvinnik)

13...♗e7 (alas, this is forced: 13...h6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 15 e4 is clearly in White's favour) **14 ♖be1 ♘d7**

After 14...♗e6 a position similar to my aforementioned game with Andersson is reached, only with an extra tempo for White, who plays 15 e4 immediately.

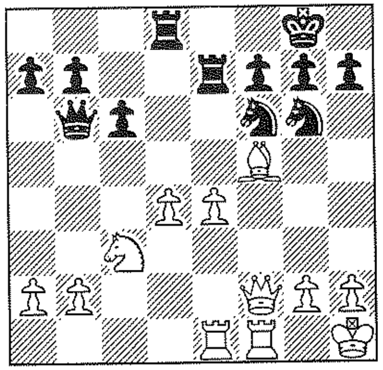
15 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 16 ♘g3 (not hurrying with 16 e4 – after 16...dxe4 17 fxe4 ♘df8 Black has a slightly inferior, but perfectly defensible position) **16...♘f6 17 ♕f2 ♗e6 18 ♘f5!**

Again less is promised by 18 e4 dxe4 (18...♘f4?! 19 ♗b1) 19 fxe4 ♖d7 20 ♘ge2.

18...♗xf5?!

'If 18...♖e8 there would have followed 19 g4, and then after the exchange on f5 White would have recaptured with the g-pawn, causing Black fresh problems.' (Botvinnik) But Black should not have exchanged on f5 in any case, since now White's attack develops swiftly and unhindered.

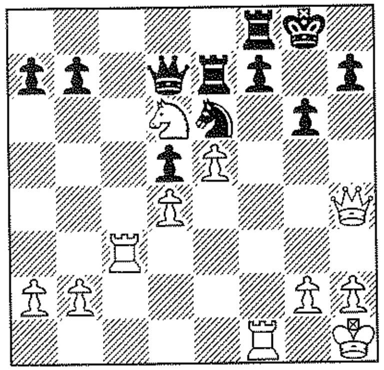
19 ♗xf5 ♕b6 20 e4 dxe4 (this merely hastens the end) **21 fxe4 ♖d8**



22 e5! (opening the way for the knight to d6) **22...♘d5 23 ♘e4 ♘f8 24 ♘d6 ♕c7 25 ♗e4 ♘e6**

After 25...♖xd6 26 exd6 ♕xd6 Botvinnik was intending 27 ♗xd5 cxd5 28 ♖e5. Also unfavourable was 25...♘b6 26 ♕h4 ♘c8 27 d5! (27...♘xd6 28 exd6 ♕xd6 29 ♗xh7+).

26 ♕h4 g6 27 ♗xd5 cxd5 28 ♖c1 ♕d7 29 ♖c3 ♖f8



30 ♘f5! ♖fe8 (or 30...♖ee8 31 ♕f6 h5 32 ♘h6+ ♔h7 33 ♘xf7 and wins) **31 ♘h6+ ♔f8 32 ♕f6 ♘g7 33 ♖cf3**

A picturesque position: White is threatening 33 ♕xf7+! and mate.

33...♖c8 34 ♘xf7 ♖e6 35 ♕g5 ♘f5 36 ♘h6 ♕g7 37 g4 1-0

A textbook game: Botvinnik employed his favourite plan of a pawn offensive in the centre (as he had long before against Capablanca – *Game No.37*) and demonstrated his deeper understanding of the 'Carlsbad' position. And in the competition as a whole he won his seventh – an absolute record! – gold medal as champion of the greatest chess power in the world.

But later, after the death of Stalin, some genuine miracles occurred: Keres 'spoiled' two excellent tournaments for Botvinnik! First he defeated him in the last round of the 22nd USSR Championship (Moscow 1955), when the champion finished half a point behind Geller and Smyslov. Then he crushed him at the finish of the Alekhine Memorial Tournament (Moscow 1956), and Botvinnik, who had been leading by a whole point (11 out of 14!), was caught by Smyslov.

'In time Paul "grew accustomed" to me. After winning this game, he was unable to hide his joy and he said: "The score is improving!" ' Mikhail Moiseevich recalled.

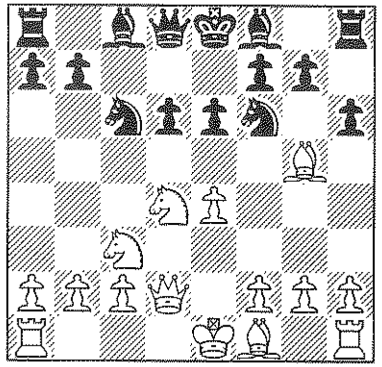
Game 44
P.Keres-M.Botvinnik
Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1956
Sicilian Defence B63

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗g5

The Rauzer Attack is rarely seen in the games of the other world champions, if one discounts Kramnik. Only the Fischer-Spassky match (Reykjavik 18th and 20th matchgames 1972) comes to mind.

6...e6 7 ♕d2 h6

'One of Botvinnik's favourite variations in the Sicilian Defence. However, Black's strong defensive position with the two bishops is nevertheless passive in character, and with energetic play White can gain the better prospects. The advisability of choosing such a complicated variation creates some doubts: the game was played in the last round, and a draw was sufficient for my opponent to win first prize.' (Keres)



This variation, prepared for the match with Bronstein (1951), is indeed not the best of Botvinnik's ideas: the two bishops do not fully compensate for the defects of Black's pawn structure, and in addition he obtains a typical position with the loss of a tempo on ...h7-h6. Nowadays the main lines are 7...a6 8 0-0-0 h6 (or 8...♗d7) and 7...♗e7 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 f4 ♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 ♕a5.

8 ♗xf6 (8 ♗e3?! ♘g4!) **8...gxf6** (after 8...♕xf6? 9 ♘db5 ♕d8 10 0-0-0 a pawn is lost) **9 0-0-0**

A mini-plus is promised by 9 ♖d1!? a6 10 ♗e2 h5 11 0-0 ♗d7 (Larsen-Botvinnik, Moscow Olympiad 1956) 12 ♘b3! ♕c7 13 ♔h1 0-0-0 14 f4.

9...a6 10 f4 h5

After 10...♗d7 11 ♗e2 ♕b6?! White has the unpleasant 12 ♗h5! ♘xd4 13 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖g8 15 g3 with a strong bind (Bondarevsky-Botvinnik, 19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951). It transpires that the exchange of queens in such set-ups does not always guarantee equality.

11 ♔b1 ♗d7 12 ♗e2

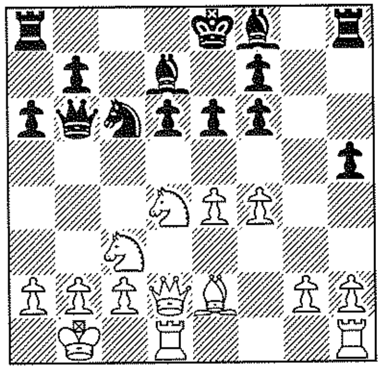
12 ♗c4 is inferior, as was shown by the methodologically valuable game Suetin-Botvinnik (20th USSR Championship, Moscow 1952): 12...♕b6 13 ♖hf1 ♕xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖c8 16 ♗b3?! ♖g8 17 ♖d2 h4! 18 f5 ♔e7 19 ♖df2 ♗h6! 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 ♖xf6 ♖cf8 22 ♖xf8 ♗xf8! 23 ♖f2 ♗h6 24 ♗c4 ♗e3 25 ♖e2 ♗g1 with excellent play.

12...♕b6

Mikhail Moiseevich also tried 12...♕c7, for example: 13 ♖hf1 (13 ♘b3!?) 13...♗e7 (if 13...0-0-0 Black has to reckon with 14 ♘b3 ♔b8 15 ♖f3 ♗e7 16 ♖h3) 14 ♖f3 ♘xd4 15 ♕xd4 ♕c5 16 ♕d2 ♗c6 17 ♖e3 ♕a5 (17...0-0-0? 18 ♘d5!; 17...h4!?) 18 a3! (18 f5! is also strong, but not 18 ♗f3 0-0-0 with equality, Bronstein-Botvinnik, Moscow 6th match-game 1951) 18...♖d8 (18...0-0-0? 19 b4! and ♘d5!) 19 ♗c4 with a clear advantage (Liberzon-Botvinnik, Moscow 1967).

Incidentally, the position after 12...♕c7 can also arise in the Najdorf Variation, but with an extra tempo for Black – 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♕c7 8 ♗xf6 gxf6 9 ♕d2 ♘c6 10 0-0-0 ♗d7 11 ♔b1 h5 12 ♗e2 (12 ♗c4!? is mentioned in Volume 3), for example 12...♗e7 13 ♗f3 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 0-0-0 15 f5 ♔b8 16 ♕d2 h4 17 ♘e2 ♗c8 18 fxe6 (18 ♘f4 d5! 19 exd5 ♗d6) 18...fxe6 19 ♘f4 ♖hg8 with a good game (Timman-Kasparov, Niksic 1983).

With 12...♕b6 Black intends to exchange pieces, hoping for a favourable endgame.



13 ♘b3!

'The correct plan.' (Botvinnik) For those times this was a fresh idea – to remove the knight from the centre! It turns out that Black's cramped position is rather unpleasant: it is not so easy for him to manoeuvre.

Botvinnik, of course, was guided by 13 h4 ♕xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖c8! (it is more passive to play 15...0-0-0 16 ♗f3 ♗c7 17 ♘e2 Keres-R.Byrne, USSR-USA match, Moscow 1955), or 13 ♖hf1 ♕xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♖xd4 h4! 16 f5 ♖c8 17 ♖d3 ♖c5! 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♖xf6 ♖g5 20 ♖f2 (but not 20 ♗f3? ♗g7 21 ♖f4 ♗e5 22 ♖g4 ♖xg4 23 ♗xg4 ♗xh2) 20...♖hg8 21 ♗f3 ♗e7 22 h3 ♖f8 23 ♖fd2 ♗c6 24 ♘d1 ♔d7 25 b3 b5 with excellent compensation for the pawn (Keres-Petrosian, Amsterdam Candidates 1956).

13...0-0-0 14 ♖hf1 ♘a5?!

'Black wants by exchanges to avoid a direct attack on the king. Even so, this move is rather premature and is the cause of his difficulties. He should have calmly played 14...♔b8, to which White would have replied 15 ♖f3, at the same time threatening the h-pawn.' (Keres)

15 ♖f3!

A manoeuvre which has become classic: the rook comes into play along the third rank, creating threats on both wings. 'Also very strong was 15 ♘xa5 ♕xa5 16 ♖f3! ♔b8 17 ♕d4 ♗e7 18 b4 ♕c7 19 ♘d5! exd5 20 ♖c3 ♗c6 21 exd5 etc.' (Keres)

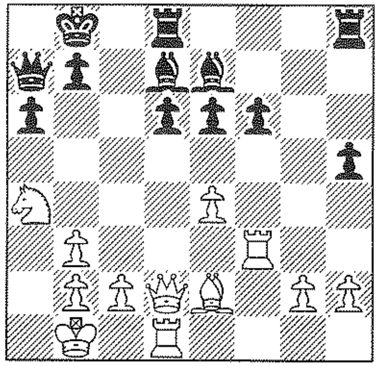
15...♘xb3 16 axb3 ♔b8 17 ♘a4!

Another very strong move, which Botvinnik clearly did not like: despite all Black's contrivances, an attack on his king is threatened.

17...♕a7

17...♗xa4?! 18 bxa4 was bad, for example: 18...♔a7 19 ♖b3! (but not 19 f5?!, as recommended by a number of analysts, on account of 19...d5! with counterplay) 19...♕c5 20 ♖b5! (a pretty computer nuance, not noticed by the chess community) 20...♕c6 21 ♕d4+ ♔a8 22 ♖xh5 or 18...♖c8 19 ♖b3 ♕c6 20 a5 with an obvious advantage. 'And if 17...♕c7 there can follow 18 ♕d4 ♗e7 19 ♖c3 ♗c6 20 ♘b6 with the unpleasant threat of ♘d5.' (Keres)

18 f5! ♗e7 (surprisingly this leads to the loss of a pawn, but also after 18...exf5 19 exf5 ♗c6 20 ♖h3 or 20 ♖g3 White has an obvious advantage) **19 fxe6 fxe6**



20 ♖xf6! ♖h7

Of course, not 20...♗xf6? 21 ♕xd6+ ♔a8 22 ♘b6+ or 20...♗xa4? 21 ♖xe6 ♗xb3 22 ♖xe7. 20...b5 would also have lost, though not so obviously, in view of 21 ♖f7! ♗e8 (21...bxa4? 22 ♖xe7) 22 ♖g7!! (stronger than 22 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 23 ♘c5) 22...bxa4 23 ♕b4+ ♔a8 (23...♔c8 24 ♖xe7! ♕xe7 25 ♗xa6+ ♔d7 26 ♕b7 mate) 24 e5! Very pretty! The threat is ♗f3+. According to Keres, 'Black has no satisfactory defence,' and I agree with this – 24...axb3 (24...♗c6?! 25 exd6 and wins) 25 exd6 ♖xd6 and now:

1) 26 ♕xb3!? (an amusing 'computer move') 26...♖xd1+ 27 ♗xd1 ♗b5 28 ♕xe6 ♖e8 29 ♗f3+ ♔b8 30 ♕e5+ ♕c7 (the play is purely machine-like; if 30...♔c8 31 ♗xh5 and wins) 31 ♕e4 ♕d7 32 ♗xh5 ♗f6 33 ♕f4+ ♗e5 34 ♖xd7 ♗xf4 35 ♗xe8 ♗xd7 36 ♗xd7 ♗xh2 37 b4 with a won endgame;

2) 26 ♖xd6 (a human move, which is also good enough) 26...bxc2+ (26...♕g1+ 27 ♗d1) 27 ♔xc2 ♕c7+ 28 ♔b3 ♕xd6 29 ♖xe7 ♕xb4+ 30 ♔xb4 ♗c6 31 g3! (after 31 ♖xe6 ♗xg2 32 ♖xa6+ ♔b7 33 ♖g6 there is very little material left) 31...♗d5 32 ♔a5! (otherwise Black has drawing chances; he has the prospect of saving himself in a rook ending) 32...h4 33 ♔xa6 hxg3 34 hxg3 ♔b8 35 ♔b6 ♔c8 36 ♗b5 also with a won ending.

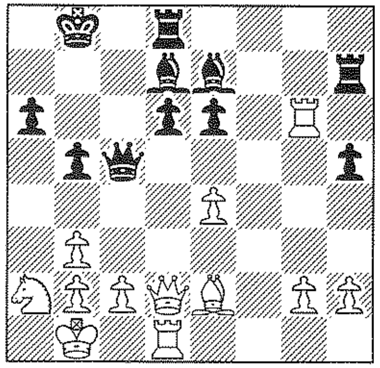
These variations show how splendid was the combination by Paul Petrovich with the sacrifice on f6. Alas, Botvinnik avoided the sharp reply 20...b5. 'Black simply reconciles himself to the loss of a pawn, hoping to use his bishops for counterplay, but these hopes are illusory.' (Keres)

21 ♖g6! b5?!

The final mistake: in releasing his queen from imprisonment, Black exposes his king. After 21...♕f2 22 ♖f1 ♕h4 23 ♘b6 ♕xh2 24 ♘xd7+ ♖xd7 25 ♗c4 d5 26 exd5 exd5 27 ♖g8+ ♗d8 28 ♗xd5 he also has a bad position, but it is still possible somehow to hold on.

22 ♘c3 ♕c5 23 ♘a2!

Botvinnik undoubtedly underestimated this manoeuvre. The threat is ♕a5 and ♘b4 with a strong attack and a material advantage.



23...♔a7 24 ♘b4 ♖f8 25 ♗f3 h4 26 h3 (the immediate 26 ♘d3 is also possible, but there is no reason to hurry) **26...♗c8** (26...♗e8? 27 ♖xe6 ♗d7 28 ♖g6 ♗e8 does not work in view of 29 ♘d3 and ♖h6) **27 ♘d3 ♕c7**

'If 27...♕d4, then 28 ♕e1 is unpleasant.' (Keres) Or 28 c3 ♕b6 29 e5!

28 ♘f4 ♖f6 (28...♗f6? 29 ♖xf6! and ♕d4+) **29 ♗g4!**

There is no point in transposing into a

won ending with opposite-coloured bishops by 29 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 30 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 31 ♖xd6 ♗e5 32 ♖d8 ♗xf4 33 ♖xc8 ♖d7 34 ♖h8 ♗g3 35 e5, since now Black's position simply collapses.

29...♖xg6 (or 29...♖hf7 30 ♘xe6! ♗xe6 31 ♗xe6 ♖xg6 32 ♗xf7) **30 ♘xg6** (with the threat of 31 ♘xe7 and 32 ♕xd6) **30...♗b7**

'In time-trouble Black probably overlooked that the e4-pawn was indirectly defended. Now any further resistance is pointless.' (Keres)

31 ♗xe6 ♗d8 32 ♗d5 ♗xd5 33 ♕xd5 ♖f7 34 e5 1-0

Not a bad revenge for previous resentments!

Keres had now turned 40, but he had not given up hope of playing a match for the world crown. Especially since, as second prize-winner at Amsterdam 1956 (after Smyslov) he had the right to participate in the next Candidates tournament without qualifying. In the previous cycle that had not been the case: Keres, Bronstein and Reshevsky, who shared 2nd-4th places in Zürich 1953, were obliged to begin from the Interzonal tournament (Gothenburg 1955: 1. Bronstein – 15 out of 20; 2. Keres – 13½; Reshevsky declined to take part).

The 1959 Candidates tournament took place in three towns of what was then Yugoslavia – Bled, Zagreb and Belgrade. FIDE had devised a severe test for the chess elite: a four-cycle marathon of eight grandmasters! These included Smyslov, Keres, Tal, Petrosian, Fischer, Gligoric... Many predicted victory for the 'fresh' ex-world champion Smyslov, but things turned into a gripping duel between the 'elder', the 43-year-old Keres and the bright new star, 23-year-old Mikhail Tal.

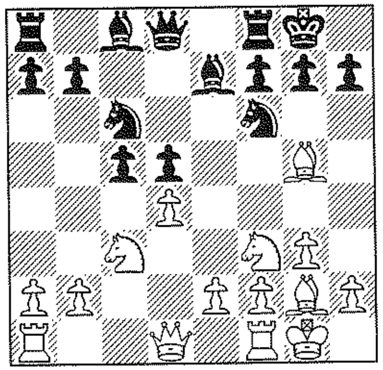
After two cycles Keres was leading, and moreover he had twice(!) defeated Tal. Then the tournament moved to Zagreb. 'The battle was uncommonly tense, and demanded the utmost energy,' recalled Paul Petrovich. 'For me, as the oldest participant, things were the most difficult. Especially difficult were the first three rounds in Zagreb, when I scored only half a point.' It was at this point that Keres lost as White to Tal in what was possibly the decisive game of the tournament...

Before the fourth cycle in Belgrade the position of the leaders was as follows: Tal – 15½ out of 21; Keres – 14; Petrosian and Smyslov – 11½. And here a fateful role was involuntarily played by Smyslov: in two 'Black' games in a row, against Tal and Keres, he successfully employed the Scheveningen, but in the first of these he blundered in a winning position, whereas in the second he won in accurate fashion. Tal's lead over his nearest pursuer thus increased by a further point.

There were only five rounds left to the end of the event, but Keres had no intention of giving up! See how, despite all the tournament escapades, in the 24th round he defeated the leader – the future world champion.

Game 45
M.Tal-P.Keres
Candidates Tournament, Yugoslavia 1959
Queen's Gambit Declined D34

1 ♘f3 d5 2 d4 c5 3 c4 e6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 g3 ♘c6 6 ♗g2 ♘f6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♗g5



9...♗e6

Later the main continuation here became 9...cxd4 10 ♘xd4 h6, which was tested in the Petrosian-Spassky match (1969) – see Volume 3.

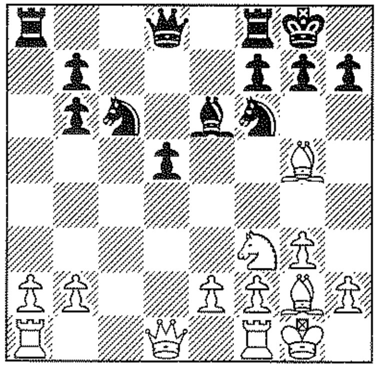
10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♘a4

A new plan, instead of the usual 11 ♖c1 ♗b6 (Rubinstein-Lasker, Berlin 1918), 11 ♘e1 d4 (Rubinstein-Tarrasch, Carlsbad 1923) and the forcing 11 ♗xf6! ♕xf6 12 ♘xd5 ♕xb2 13 ♘c7 ♖ad8 14 ♕c1 ♕xc1 15 ♖axc1 and ♘xe6 (Rubinstein-Schlechter, Vienna 1908; Petrosian-Spassky, Moscow 16th matchgame 1969) – it is because of this cheerless endgame that Black prefers 9...cxd4 nowadays.

11...♗b6

'In the event of 11...♗e7, with 12 ♗e3 White could have created strong pressure on the important c5-square and secured an enduring initiative without any risk.' (Keres) However, in the game Geller-Spassky (Riga 7th matchgame 1965) after 12...♗g4 13 ♖c1 ♖e8 14 ♘c5 ♗xc5 15 ♗xc5 ♘e4 16 ♗e3 ♕d7 Black maintained the balance. Another harmless continuation is 12 ♘d4 ♘xd4 13 ♕xd4 ♕a5 14 ♖fc1 ♖fc8 or 14 ♘c3 ♖ac8!

12 ♘xb6 axb6

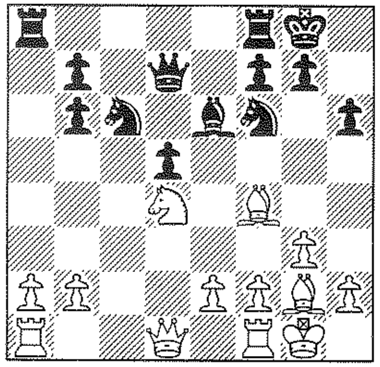


13 ♘d4

'After the game Tal was criticised for this move and it was suggested that ...d5-d4 should be prevented by 13 ♗e3. Black could have replied 13...♖a6 (and ...♕d7), 13...♗f5 or 13...♖e8. I am not sure that White stands better.' (Keres) Although, after 13...♖e8 14 ♖e1 ♖a6 15 ♗d4 ♘e4 16 b3 b5 17 a3 his chances are marginally preferable (Geller-Sarapu, Sousse Interzonal 1967).

13...h6 14 ♗f4 (14 ♗e3 ♘g4!?) **14...♕d7**

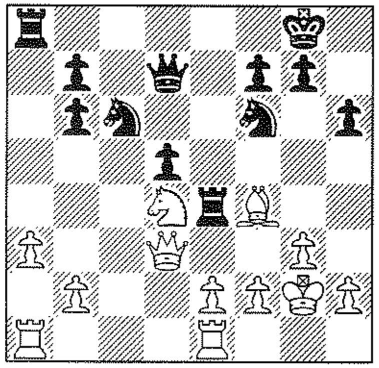
With the positional threat of ...♗h3: the exchange of light-squared bishops is obviously advantageous to Black.



15 a3?

The source of White's subsequent problems. Apparently Tal had relaxed somewhat, deciding that he was already assured of first place... White had a choice between 15 ♖e1 ♗h3 16 ♗h1 and, according to Keres, 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♕b3 'with some chances of gaining an advantage.'

15...♗h3! 16 ♕d3 ♖fe8 17 ♖fe1 ♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 ♖e4!



'Now the black pieces are very actively placed. The exchange on c6 is hardly acceptable for White, and he is forced to concede the important d4-square.' (Keres)

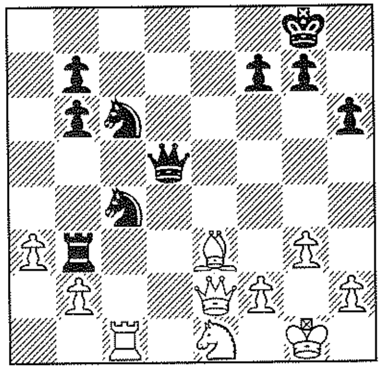
Paul Petrovich also conducts the next part of the game very well, methodically increasing his advantage.

19 ♘f3 ♖ae8 20 ♗d2 d4! (threatening ...♕e6) **21 e3** (21 ♕b5!? – Keres) **21...♕d5** (and now 22...dxe3 is threatened, winning a pawn) **22 exd4 ♖xd4!**

'Black would not have achieved anything with the pretty move 22...♘e5 on account of the cool reply 23 ♕c3!' (Keres) And indeed, after 23...♘c4 24 ♔g1 b5 he has much less than in the game.

23 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 24 ♕e2 ♘d6 25 ♗e3 ♖d3 26 ♔g1 (of course, not 26 ♗xb6? ♘c4) **26...♘c4 27 ♘e1 ♖b3 28 ♖c1**

'Black's pieces have taken control of the entire board and White is now bound to lose material. 28 ♗c1? did not work because of 28...♘d4, while 28 ♖d1 would have driven the queen to a better square – 28...♕e4.' (Keres)



28...♘xe3! (stronger than 28...♘xb2 29 ♖b1) **29 fxe3 ♕e5**

'It can be anticipated that White's position should quickly collapse, but Tal skilfully creates counterplay.' (Keres)

30 ♘g2 (30 ♘d3? ♕e4) **30...♖xb2 31 ♕d3 ♕e6**

Time-trouble! In a winning position Black misses a chance to cripple the white knight by 31...g5!, after which the win would have become a matter of straightforward technique.

32 ♘f4 ♖b3

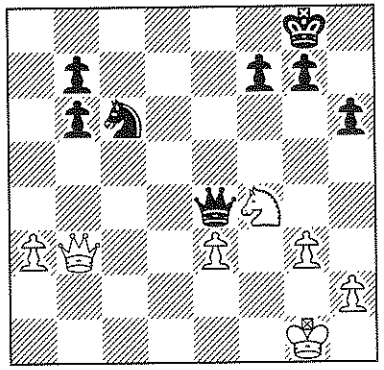
It would appear that 32...♕a2!? would have won more quickly, but... 'In time-trouble Black quite correctly avoids going in for unnecessary complications: after 33 ♕e4 ♖xh2 34 ♖f1 White's pieces would have been very active, which would hardly have been compensated by the win of the h2-pawn.' (Keres) But in my opinion, after 34...♖d2 White's days are numbered: 35 ♕e8+ (35 a4 ♖d8, then ...♖a8 and ...♖xa4) 35...♔h7 36 ♕e4+ g6 37 ♘h5 f5 etc. I will give another 'active' variation: 33 ♕d7 ♖xh2 34 ♕c8+ ♔h7 35 ♖f1 ♖c2 36 ♕f5+ g6 37 ♕d7 ♘e5 38 ♕xb7 ♘g4 39 ♘d3 ♖c7! and wins.

I can understand Paul Petrovich: he was afraid of squandering his advantage...

33 ♖c3

It was not in the spirit of Tal to seek salvation in the rook endgame after 33 ♘xe6 ♖xd3 34 ♘d4 ♖xa3 (34...♘e5!?) 35 ♘xc6 bxc6 36 ♖xc6 ♖b3.

33...♖xc3 34 ♕xc3 ♕e4 35 ♕b3



35...b5! (with the threat of ...♘e5) **36 ♕xb5 ♕xe3+ 37 ♔f1 ♕f3+ 38 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 39 ♔f1 g5**

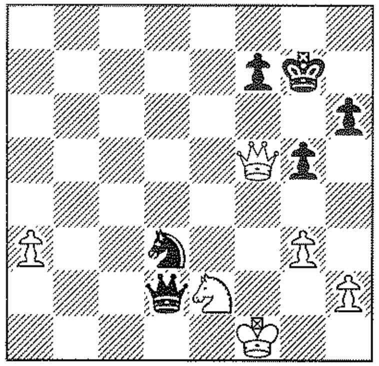
'More convincing was 39...♘d4! 40 ♕d3 (after 40 ♕xb7 g5 a piece is lost) 40...♕xd3+ 41 ♘xd3 b5 with a hopeless ending for White.' (Keres)

40 ♘e2 ♘e5! (more energetic than 40...♕e7) **41 ♕xb7 ♘d3**

The sealed move. 'The adjourned position was thoroughly analysed. It appeared that the game would not last long, but Tal found a clever defence. Right to the end Keres had to play with full intensity.' (Ragozin)

42 ♕c8+ (if 42 ♕g2, then 42...♕d2 or 42...g4 is possible) **42...♔g7 43 ♕f5 ♕d2!**

Threatening to win the knight by 44...♕e1+ and ...♕xe2+.

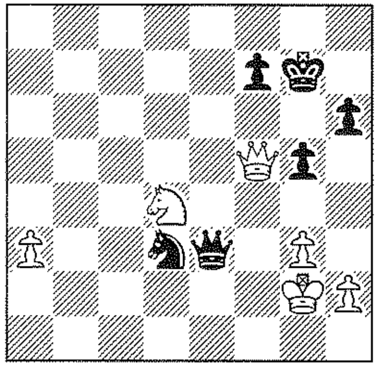


44 ♘d4!

'The only move. White would have lost immediately after 44 ♕f3 ♕d1+ and 45...♘e1+ or 44 ♕e4 ♕e1+ 45 ♔g2 ♕f2+ and 46...♕f1+. It was also bad to play 44 ♘g1 ♕d1+ 45 ♔g2 ♕c2+, for example: 46 ♔f1 ♕b1+ 47 ♔g2 ♘f4+ or 46 ♔f3 ♕f2+ 47 ♔g4 (47 ♔e4 ♘c5+) 47...h5+ 48 ♔xg5 f6+ etc.' (Keres)

44...♕e1+ (44...♕d1+ 45 ♔g2 ♘e1+ 46 ♔f2 ♕xd4+ 47 ♔xe1 was not so clear) **45 ♔g2 ♕e3!**

'Despite the limited material, Black has a dangerous attack, leading by force to gain of material.' (Keres)



46 ♕d5!

Again the only reply! If 46 ♕g4? or 46 ♕d7?, then 46...♕f2+ is decisive, while after knight moves Keres gives these variations:

1) 46 ♘b3 ♕e2+ 47 ♔h3 ♘f4+!;

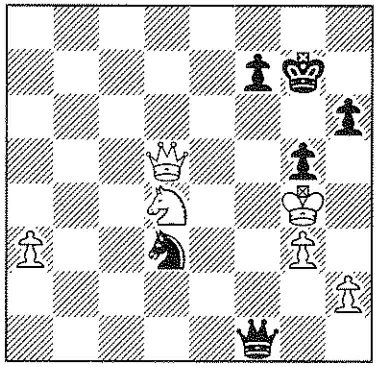
2) 46 ♘f3 ♕e2+ 47 ♔h3 ♘f2+ 48 ♔g2 ♘d1+! 49 ♔h3 ♕f1+;

3) 46 ♘c6 ♕d2+ 47 ♔h3 (47 ♔g1 ♕c1+ 48 ♕f1 ♕c5+!) 47...♘f2+ 48 ♔g2 ♘g4+ 49 ♔h3 h5;

4) 46 ♘b5 ♕e2+! 47 ♔g1 (47 ♔h1 ♘e1!) 47...♘e5.

In each case Black wins easily.

46...♕f2+ (if 46...♕d2+?! there would have followed 47 ♔f3!, but not 47 ♔h3? ♘f2+ 48 ♔g2 ♘d1+ 49 ♔f3 g4+!) **47 ♔h3 ♕f1+ 48 ♔g4**



48...♘f2+!

A fine manoeuvre! 48...♕d1+?! 49 ♔f5! was by no means so clear. But the main thing is that Keres avoids a subtle trap: after the tempting 48...h5+? 49 ♔xg5! (only not 49 ♔xh5? ♕h3+ 50 ♔xg5 f6 mate) 49...♕f6+? 50 ♔xh5 ♘e5 (with the threat of mate on h6) White would unexpectedly have won with the thunderous 51 ♕d6!! – 51...♕xd6 52 ♘f5+ ♔f6 53 ♘xd6. True, no one has shown that Black still has a draw here with 49...f6+ 50 ♔h4 ♘e5 51 ♕e6! ♕g2 52 ♘f5+ ♔h7 53 ♕xf6 ♕xh2+ 54 ♔g5 ♕d2+ with perpetual check.

49 ♔f5 ♕d3+!

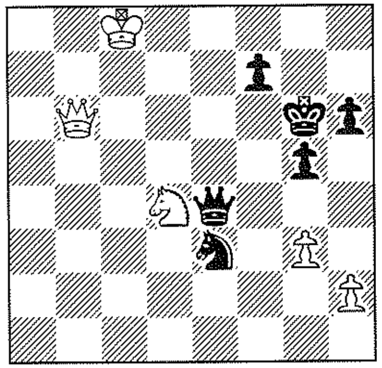
'After 49...♕b1+ 50 ♔e5 Black does not

achieve anything with either 50...♘g4+ 51 ♔d6 ♕b8+ 52 ♔c5, or 50...♘d3+ 51 ♔d6 ♕b8+ 52 ♔c6 etc. If 49...♘d1+ White saves himself with 50 ♕f3!, while 49...♕a6 50 ♘c6! is unclear.' (Keres)

50 ♔e5 ♘g4+ 51 ♔d6 ♕xa3+ (with the fall of this dangerous pawn the outcome is decided, but Tal continues fighting with all his might) **52 ♔c7 ♕e7+ 53 ♔c8 ♘e3**

53...♕e8+ 54 ♔b7 ♘xh2 was also possible, but Keres did not want to take his knight too far away.

54 ♕b5 (but not 54 ♘f5+? ♘xf5 55 ♕xf5 ♕e6+) **54...♕e4 55 ♕b2 ♔g6 56 ♕b6+**



56...f6

'56...♔h5 57 ♕f6 ♔g4! was technically simpler, not creating any new weaknesses.' (Keres)

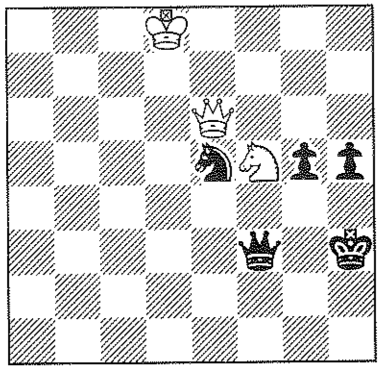
57 ♘e6 ♘c4 58 ♕a6 ♘e5 (threatening ...♕c6+) **59 ♘c7** (if 59 ♘f8+ ♔f7 60 ♕e6+ ♔xf8 61 ♕xf6+, then simply 61...♘f7) **59...♕c2 60 ♕d6**

'After 60 h4 (60 ♕e6? ♕f5) 60...♕f5+! White has to give up the pawn in less favourable circumstances: 61 ♔b7 ♕f3+ 62 ♔c8 ♕xg3 or 61 ♔b8 ♘d7+ 62 ♔a7 ♕f2+ etc.' (Keres)

60...♕xh2 61 ♘d5 ♕f2 (61...♕xg3!) **62 ♔b7** (62 ♕e6 ♕c5+ 63 ♔b7 ♕f8 wins for Black, but now 63 ♕e6 is threatened) **62...♕xg3! 63 ♕xf6+ ♔h5 64 ♕e6!**

Desperate resistance! Tal creates another threat – 65 ♘f6+ ♔h4 66 ♘e4 winning the h6-pawn.

64...♘g4 65 ♘e7 (if 65 ♕f7+ ♔h4 66 ♘e7, then 66...♕g2+ 67 ♔b6 ♕e4) **65...♕f3+ 66 ♔c8 ♔h4 67 ♘f5+ ♔h3 68 ♔d8** (68 ♘xh6? ♕f8+) **68...h5! 69 ♕g6 ♘e5 70 ♕e6 ♘g4 71 ♕g6 ♘e5 72 ♕e6**



72...♕d3+ 73 ♘d4+

Not allowing the opponent to conclude the game with a pretty sacrifice that wins by a tempo after 73 ♔e7 ♕d7+! 74 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 75 ♔xd7 g4 76 ♔e6 g3.

73...♘g4 74 ♕d5 ♘f2! (the signal for the h-pawn to begin advancing) **75 ♔c8 h4 76 ♕e5 ♕e4 77 ♕f6 ♕f4 78 ♘f5 ♘e4 79 ♕e6 ♕g4! 0-1**

With the threat of ...♘g3. White resigned. 'Keres's fine technique in this game was awarded the first special prize.' (Ragozin)

Then Keres gained two more wins and Tal, in order to avoid conceding first place, had to win a highly dubious position against the young Fischer in the penultimate round (*Game No.125*). Incidentally, in this tournament Bobby performed the role of talisman for Tal: he lost all four games to him(!), whereas against Keres he achieved a score of +2 -2.

Commenting on the outcome of the Candidates event, the press wrote that the 'eternal second' had once again demonstrated his heroic play. 'Unlucky Keres!' exclaimed Gligoric. 'With 18½ out of 28 he would have been first in all the similar preceding tournaments – in Budapest (1950), Zürich (1953) and Amsterdam (1956), but on this occasion too he will not meet Botvinnik in the match that he so desired... Keres scored 15 wins! But this was not worth a penny, if Tal scored 20 points!' I should add that the third prize-winner, Petrosian, finished three points behind Keres...

However, second place gave Paul Petrovich the right to play in the next Candidates tournament (Curaçao 1962) without having to qualify. Here the struggle for victory was between Petrosian, Geller and... once again Keres, who was already 46 (whereas the young Fischer and Tal started too insipidly; the latter even had to withdraw through illness). 'The tournament was extraordinarily difficult,' Petrosian related. 'I do not recall any other such arduous event: the unusual climatic conditions, the heat. All of us, the participants, were terribly tired. And this told particularly in the fourth and last cycle.'

Before the start of it Keres had made an inconceivable spurt (6 out of 7!) and was leading the race, half a point ahead of his rivals. Then Petrosian caught the leader and... began making draws. In the penultimate, 27th round these cautious tactics proved successful for the future world champion: Keres unexpectedly lost to Benko. The adjourned position still did not look altogether clear, but Benko analysed it all night ('With Petrosian's help!' asserts Korchnoi), and the resumption lasted only six more moves. 'Only once did I see Keres upset: at the finish in Curaçao,' recalls Tal. 'The theory of probability played a cruel trick on him: before this he had won against Benko seven games in a row (*and a further two later – G.K.*), but in this, the most important game in his life, he lost.' What drama!

On the final day Paul Petrovich could still have caught 'iron Tigran', if he had defeated Fischer, but alas... The final placings were: 1. Petrosian – 17½ out of 27; 2-3. Geller and Keres – 17; 4. Fischer – 14; 5. Korchnoi – 13½; 6. Benko – 12; 7. Tal – 7 (out of 21); 8. Filip – 7.

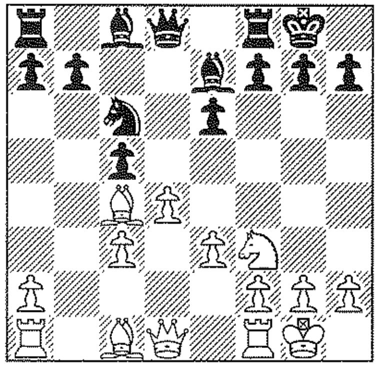
Thus Petrosian went forward to play Botvinnik, while Keres and Geller had to play an additional match for second place, which gave the right to play in the next Candidates event. In this match of eight games there was a very tough fight, and its outcome – 4½-3½ in favour of Keres – was decided only by this concluding spectacular miniature.

Game 46
P.Keres-Ye.Geller
Candidates Play-Off Match,
Moscow 1962, 8th game
Queen's Gambit Declined D41

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e3 ♘c6 7 ♗c4 (7 ♗d3 – *Games Nos.117, 119 and 120*) **7...♘xc3**

In my opinion, it is better to play 7...cxd4 8 exd4 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 (*Game No.36*) 10...a6.

8 bxc3 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0



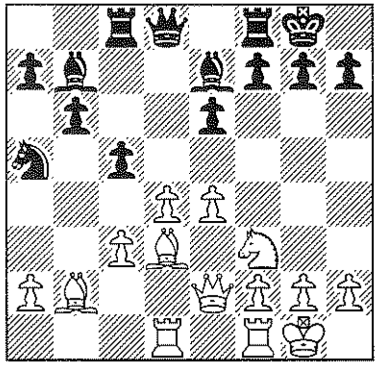
10 e4

10 ♕e2 b6 11 ♖d1 ♕c7 12 e4 is slightly more accurate (R.Byrne-Fischer, New York 1959/60). 'The dark-squared bishop could then have been used on the c1-h6 diagonal.' (Keres)

10...b6 11 ♗b2 (11 ♗f4!?) **11...♗b7 12 ♕e2 ♘a5**

'Black has "slight difficulties". The d4-d5 advance is constantly in the air: for example, after 12...♖c8 13 d5! exd5 14 ♗xd5 followed by c3-c4 White has an excellent position. But the move in the game diverts the knight from the main battlefield.' (Keres)

13 ♗d3 ♖c8 14 ♖ad1



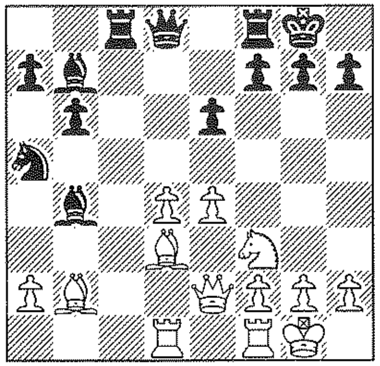
14...cxd4?!

14...c4 15 ♗b1 b5 16 ♗c1 ♕c7 17 ♗g5 or 17 h4!? is also satisfactory for White. 14...♕c7!? is interesting – in similar positions from the Queen's Indian Defence (with the pawn on a3) this is the best defence: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♘c3 ♗b7 5 a3 d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 e3 ♘xc3 8 bxc3 ♗e7 9 ♗d3 c5 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♕e2 0-0 12 ♗b2 ♖c8 13 ♖ad1 ♕c7! 14 e4 ♘a5 15 ♖fe1 ½-½ (Polugayevsky-Portisch, Plovdiv 1983), or 7 ♕c2 ♘xc3 8 bxc3 ♗e7 9 e3 ♕c8 10 ♗b2 c5 11 ♗b5+ ♘c6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♗d3 ♔h8 14 ♕e2 ♕c7 15 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 16 e4 ♘a5 17 ♖fe1 ♗f6 18 e5 ♗e7 19 ♘d2 cxd4 20 cxd4 ♗d5 with double-edged play (Kasparov-Ehlvest, Belfort 1988).

However, with the pawn on a2 Black does not have the b3-square and 14...♕c7 is well met by 15 d5!, for example: 15...exd5 16 exd5 c4 17 ♗c2 or 15...c4 16 ♗c2 ♖cd8 (16... e5 17 ♗c1) 17 dxe6 fxe6 18 ♘d4 with the initiative.

15 cxd4 ♗b4?

Planning ...♗c3, Geller abandons his king to its fate. 15...♗f6! was essential, similar to many games (for example, mine with Ehlvest), although with the pawn on a2 Black's position is rather passive. Possibly it was because of this that Geller conceived the suicidal idea of 15...♗b4?



16 d5!

Of course! The breakthrough in the centre gives White a crushing attack: the 'Queen's Indian' bishops are ready to trample on the solitary black king. Keres is given an opportunity to remember the days of his youth, when he favoured the King's Gambit...

16...exd5

A practically forced exchange. After 16...♗c3?! 17 ♗a3! ♖e8 18 dxe6! (Keres's recommendation 18 ♗b5 is unclear because of 18...exd5 19 ♗xe8 ♕xe8) 18...♖xe6 19 ♗c4 Black is in great difficulties. And if 16...♕e7 White has the unpleasant 17 ♘d4! ♗c3 (17...exd5? 18 ♘f5) 18 d6 (18 dxe6 fxe6 19 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 20 ♘b5 ♖c5 21 ♘xa7 is also possible) 18...♕d7 (18...♕xd6? 19 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 20 ♘b5 and wins) 19 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 20 e5 also with an obvious advantage.

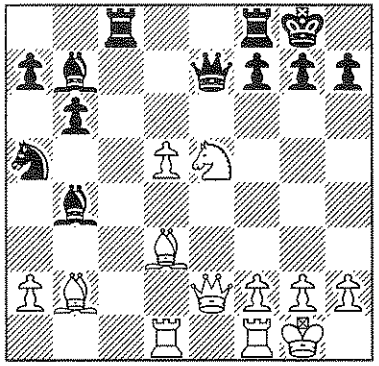
17 exd5 (threatening ♕e4) **17...♕e7**

After this move and White's reply Black simply collapses. It was equally hopeless to play 17...♗xd5? 18 ♕e5! f6 (or 18...♕f6 19 ♕h5 g6 20 ♗xf6 gxh5 21 ♘g5) 19 ♕h5 g6 20 ♗xg6 hxg6 21 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 22 ♕h5+ ♔g7 23 ♖xd5 and wins.

Perhaps the game could have been prolonged by 17...♖e8 18 ♘e5 (with the threat of ♗xh7+) 18...♕h4 (18...f6? 19 ♕h5 fxe5 20 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 21 f4!) 19 ♗b5 ♖ed8 20 ♗d7, or 17...♗c3 18 ♗f5! (the alternative is 18 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 19 ♖fe1, and 19...♗xd5? fails to 20 ♗e4 ♖c5 21 ♕d3 or 20...♗c4 21 ♖xd8 ♗xe2 22 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 23 ♖xe2) 18...♖c4 (18...♖c7 19 ♗a3 ♖e8 20 ♕d3 g6 21 d6! ♖c4 22 d7 and wins) 19 ♘e5 ♗xe5 20 ♕xe5 f6 21 ♗e6+ ♔h8 22 ♕h5. Although, it has to be admitted, here too Black has dreadful, very difficult positions.

18 ♘e5!

Now a defence can no longer be found.



18...f6

'Hopeless is 18...♗d6 19 ♕h5 g6 (19...h6 20 ♕f5 g6 21 ♘xg6) 20 ♘g4!! etc.' (Keres) That is, 20...f6 (20...gxh5 21 ♘h6 mate) 21 ♕h4 g5 (21...♔g7 22 ♖fe1 and wins) 22 ♕xg5+! fxg5 23 ♘h6 mate. A pretty variation!

I also looked at 18...♖fd8 19 ♕e4 g6 20 ♕d4! ♖xd5 (if 20...♕c5 White wins with the unexpected 21 ♕f4 ♗xd5 22 ♗a6! ♖a8 23 ♘d3) 21 ♘xg6! (this leads to a spectacular mate; 21 ♘c6 is more modest) 21...fxg6 22 ♕h8+ ♔f7 23 ♕xh7+ ♔e8 24 ♗b5+! ♖xb5 25 ♕g8+ ♕f8 26 ♕xg6+ ♕f7 (or 26...♔e7 27 ♕h7+ ♕f7 28 ♖fe1+ ♗xe1 29 ♖xe1+) 27 ♖fe1+ (the most exact) 27...♗xe1 28 ♖xe1+ ♔f8 29 ♕h6+! Amazing computer geometry...

19 ♕h5! g6 (19...fxe5? 20 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 21 ♗g6+) **20 ♘xg6!**

A completely correct sacrifice, leading to a forced win.

20...hxg6 21 ♗xg6 ♕g7

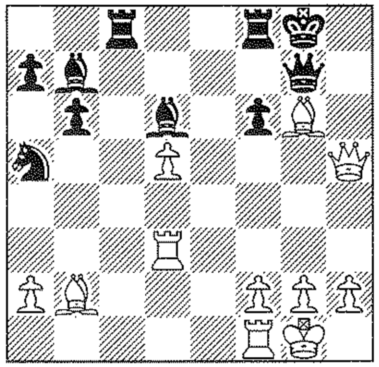
This loses quickly, but the 'most critical', in the words of Keres, 21...♗a6 would not have saved Black because of 22 d6!, for example: 22...♗xd6 23 ♖fe1 ♗e5 (23...♕g7 24 ♖xd6 ♘c4 25 ♖d3 ♘xb2 26 ♖g3) 24 ♗xe5 fxe5 25 ♖xe5, or 22...♕g7 23 d7 ♖cd8 (23...♖c5 24 ♗f5) 24 ♖d4! ♗xf1 25 ♖g4 ♗e2 26 ♗h7+ ♔h8 27 ♗f5+ ♔g8 28 ♕h7+.

'21...♖c7 is also insufficient in view of 22 d6! ♗xd6 23 ♖fe1, and after 23...♗e5 (23...♕d8 24 ♖d4) 24 ♖xe5! fxe5 25 ♗xe5 ♖f6 26 ♕g5 further resistance is pointless.' (Keres) But after the little tactical blow 26...♖d6! the win for White is not so simple: 27 ♗f7+ ♔xf7 28 ♕g7+ ♔e8 29 ♕g8+ ♔d7 (29...♕f8 30 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 31 ♗xd6+ ♖e7 32 h4!) 30 ♕g4+! (an unexpected computer solution) 30...♔c6 (30...♔d8 31 ♗xd6) 31 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 32 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 33 ♕f4+ ♔d7 34 h4 and the pawn is bound to queen.

However, in my opinion, after 21...♖c7 it is stronger to play 22 ♗f5! ♗c8 (22...♖f7 23 ♗e6 and wins) 23 ♕g4+ ♕g7 24 ♗xc8, regaining the piece and retaining a decisive material advantage.

22 ♖d3 ♗d6

If 22...♗a6 23 ♖g3 ♗xf1 White wins immediately by 24 ♗h7+ ♔h8 25 ♗f5+.' (Keres)



23 f4! (renewing the threat of ♖g3) **23...♕h8 24 ♕g4 ♗c5+ 25 ♔h1 ♖c7**

If 25...♖f7 or 25...♕g7, then 26 ♖g3.

26 ♗h7+! ♔f7 27 ♕e6+ ♔g7 28 ♖g3+ 1-0

A splendid win, especially taking into account its competitive importance and the class of the opponent.

Three years later the Candidates tournament was replaced by a series of knock-out matches, and in the very first of these (Riga 1965) Keres was drawn against the future world champion, the 28-year-old Boris Spassky. This was probably Spassky's most difficult match in this cycle: his overall 6-4 success was secured only by a win in the final, ultra-sharp game. After this Paul Petrovich, as he put it, 'realised that the modern elimination system via matches was not for players who were already nearly 50.'

The fact that Keres did not in fact play a match for the world championship was undoubtedly a grievous thing for chess, a kind of evil mockery of fate. Who else for so many years – effectively a quarter of a century, beginning with the AVRO tournament – was so close to the throne? But all the time he lacked a bit of luck. As the press wrote, 'Keres's tragedy in the Candidates events was that each time, when he played very well, there would be a participant who played even better, or who was simply more lucky.'

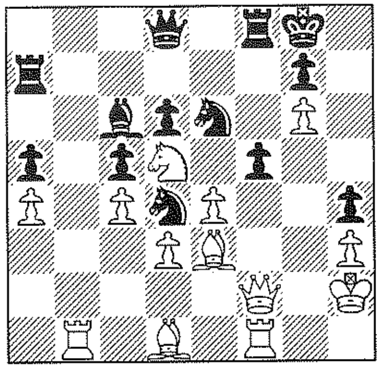
It would appear that something in Keres's character prevented him from reaching the top. He was a mild, intelligent person, a true gentleman. At decisive moments he was sometimes let down by nerves: both the nightmare of the war and the post-war terror of his arrest were bound to have left their mark. To play, after what he had endured, was difficult... I think that, if Estonia had not become part of the USSR, Keres would have presented a considerable danger to the Soviet players. Perhaps (bearing in mind Korchnoi's experience) he should nevertheless have decided to escape to the West in 1944. In this case he could well have become contender 'No.1' and the 1948 match-tournament might have turned out somewhat differently.

At any event, the final word in the lengthy dispute between the two chess greats – Botvinnik and Keres – was had by the sixth world champion. At the age of 55 he performed brilliantly on board 1 for 'Trud' in the USSR Team Cup (Moscow 1966), beginning with three successive wins: over Birbrager, Smyslov and Lutikov. Then came the turn of Paul Petrovich.

Game 47

M.Botvinnik-P.Keres

USSR Team Cup, Moscow 1966



27 ♖b8! 1-0

If 27...♕xb8 28 ♕xh4 with inevitable mate.

When in the next round Botvinnik also defeated Spassky, the main contender for the crown (*Game No.78*) and reached 5 out of 5, Keres exclaimed in admiration: 'How he makes short work of us!' Then, however, fatigue set in, and Mikhail Moiseevich missed a one-move win in games with Geller and the current world champion Petrosian.

Many years later Tigran Vartanovich recalled that he had found playing Botvinnik even more difficult than playing Fischer: 'There was a very unpleasant feeling of inevitability. Once in a conversation with Keres I mentioned this and even compared Botvinnik with a bulldozer, which sweeps away everything in its path. Keres smiled and said: "But can you imagine what it was like to play him when he was young?" It is curious that Bronstein also spoke about the Botvinnik of the late 1940s in the same vein: 'He played like a bulldozer: he advanced in the centre and his opponents were unable to withstand the strength of his mental intensity, his energy. Nor could they withstand the accuracy of his play – it was as though he did not move a piece, but drove a nail into the board!'

...I must mention the enormous authority that Keres enjoyed throughout the chess world. 'No representative of the Soviet Union had the slightest chance of becoming President of FIDE, and no ex-world champion after Euwe could have contended for the post. But Keres could – and he would have become President without any doubt! Everyone, irrespective of the colour of their skin, their views and their political standing, related to him with equal respect, regarding him as the supreme judge, the arbitrator in any disputes.' (Tal)

At the FIDE Congress that was held during the World Olympiad in Nice (June 1974), Dr Euwe was thinking of leaving the post of FIDE President and he asked Milunka Lazarevic to find a worthy replacement. 'Suddenly I saw Keres walking about,' recalls Milunka. "Maestro, what are you doing here?" "I'm one of the public!" Keres smiled: he was an honoured guest of the Olympiad. I asked him: "Paul Petrovich, tell me: are you able to resolve chess questions independently, without the Soviet Chess Federation? If so, then we will put you forward for the post of FIDE President: I will go into the hall now and collect the signatures of all the grandmasters." It was very pleasant for him to hear this, as usual he blushed, began to laugh... and then he suddenly became thoughtful and replied: "You know, Milunka, independently I can only write books." That was our last meeting.'

Keres's sudden death in June 1975 – of a heart attack – was called by Botvinnik the greatest loss suffered by the chess world since the death of Alekhine (Rubinstein died later than Alekhine, but a terrible illness had effectively buried the 'great Akiba' much earlier). For the first time the sixth champion uttered the affectionate words 'my friend Paul'. And, as usual, an accurate evaluation:

'At another time Paul would probably have become world champion. But in the 1940s-1950s he could become this only by pushing aside the author of these lines. Bronstein, and Smyslov, and Tal found themselves in roughly the same position. It is a moot question, which is better: to play one match for the world championship, or, like Keres, to finish second in the Candidates tournaments on four occasions (1953, 1956, 1959 and 1962). What did he lack, to reach the very top in chess? I think that at critical moments Paul lacked strength of character. When he experienced great pressure, he simply played below his capabilities.'

No less interesting is the opinion of Spassky: 'Keres, like his native Estonia, had a tragic fate... Paul Petrovich always played at a very high level and at times he approached the very summit of chess. There was certainly a period when he was No.1 in the world – both by rating and by his chess strength.'

The Euwe Problem

Another opponent who could have prevented Botvinnik from ascending to the throne was ex-world champion Max Euwe. Firstly, the score of their pre-war games was +2 =3 in the Dutchman's favour. 'It was difficult for me to play against him: I found it hard to understand his play,' Botvinnik admitted. 'He would skilfully change the situation on the board, and would make kind of "long" moves (I would overlook them). At the first opportunity he would begin a swift offensive, he calculated variations accurately and he had made a deep study of the endgame. Everyone considered him a good strategist, but I cannot help agreeing with Alekhine, who after his win in the 1937 return match wrote that he regarded Euwe as a tactician.'

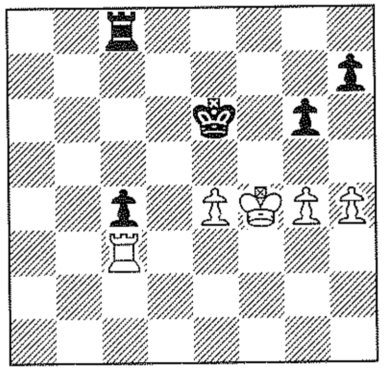
Secondly, after Alekhine's death, many were of the quite reasonable opinion that, following historical tradition, Euwe, as the only living ex-champion, should be proclaimed champion; then a challenger should be identified (the Americans suggested Reshevsky) and a match held between them. FIDE, which for the first time had the opportunity to take charge of the world championship, even managed to take this decision at its congress in The Hague (1947). But Euwe remained world champion for only two hours, until the Soviet delegation appeared in the hall, led by grandmaster Ragozin, Botvinnik's close friend and trainer, soon to become FIDE Vice-President... Here it transpired that the USSR was ready to bear two-thirds of the expense of staging a match-tournament, and everything was changed. The congress approved a five-cycle match-tournament (The Hague/Moscow 1948) with five participants: Euwe, Botvinnik, Keres, Reshevsky and Smyslov (Fine was also invited, and was later to claim that his candidature had been rejected by... the American Federation, while the reserve candidature of Najdorf was rejected by the Soviet Federation).

At this troubled time a considerable role was played by the duel between Botvinnik and Euwe at the major international tournament in Groningen (1946). 'In the West some thought that, if Euwe were to win in Groningen, there would be no two ways about it – he should be immediately declared the new world champion. This imparted additional interest to the tournament,' wrote Botvinnik, who was seriously afraid that Euwe, on becoming champion, would lose a match to Reshevsky (the latter, incidentally, did not take part in the Groningen tournament), and 'the title of world champion would for ever slip away from us to America.'

From the start both of the main favourites set a furious pace – 5½ out of 6! Then Botvinnik won a further three games(!), whereas the Dutchman slowed down, losing to Smyslov.

In the 10th round the leaders met. It need hardly be said who the Dutch public supported. 'Euwe seized the initiative,' Mikhail Moiseevich recalls, 'and demonstrated what a connoisseur he was of the endgame: by the resumption he had skilfully taken play into a rook ending, highly similar to the endgame Lasker-Rubinstein (St Petersburg 1914 – *Volume 1, Game No.66*) with reversed colours. The rook ending would inevitably transpose into a lost pawn endgame; it was time for me to resign...'

Game 48
M.Botvinnik-M.Euwe
Groningen 1946, 10th round



39...h6?!

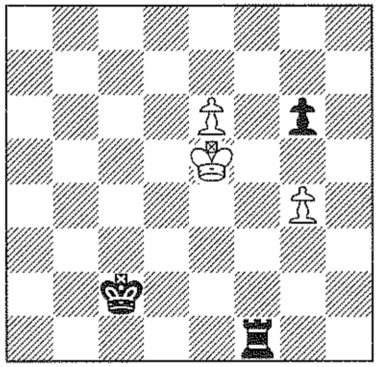
The penultimate move before the time control, made in time-trouble. For more than half a century it was thought to be no worse than 39...♖c6 or 39...♖c5, for example:

1) 39...♖c6 (suggested by Levenfish) 40 h5 ♖c5 41 e5 ♖c6 42 hxg6 (42 ♔e4? g5 43 ♔d4 ♖c8 44 ♔e4 ♖c7 45 ♔d4 ♖d7+ 46 ♔e4 ♖f7 and wins) 42...hxg6 43 ♔e4 g5 44 ♖h3 c3 45 ♖h6+ ♔d7 46 ♖h7+ ♔e8 47 ♖h1 with a draw (Botvinnik);

2) 39...♖c5! This move was suggested by Flohr in analysis after the game. Indeed, now White loses after both 40 g5 ♖c7 41 ♔f3 (41 e5 ♔d5 42 e6 ♖c7) 41...♔e5 42 ♔e3 ♖c8 43 ♖c2 c3 44 ♔d3 ♔f4 45 ♔d4 ♖d8+, and 40 h5 g5+ 41 ♔e3 ♔e5 42 ♖c2 c3 43 ♔d3 h6 44 ♔e3 ♖c8 45 ♔d3 ♔f4.

However, Euwe parried Flohr's move by 40 e5! with the sequel 40...♔d5 41 ♖e3 c3 (41...♖c6 42 h5) 42 e6 c2 43 e7 ♖c8 44 ♖e1 ♔d6 45 ♔g5 ♔d7 46 ♖c1 ♔xe7 47 ♔h6 with a draw, or 40...♖c8 41 h5! (*41 ♔e4? b6! – G.K.*) 41...♔d5 42 hxg6 hxg6 43 ♔g5 ♖c6 44 ♖e3 ♖e6 45 ♔f4 ♔d4 46 ♖e1 c3 47 ♖d1+ ♔c4 48 ♔e4 c2 49 ♖c1 ♔c3 50 ♔d5 ♖e8 51 e6 ♔b2 52 ♖h1 c1♕ 53 ♖xc1 ♔xc1 54 ♔e5 ♔d2 55 ♔f6 ♔e3 56 ♔xg6! (56 ♔f7? ♖xe6!) 56...♖xe6+ 57 ♔f5!, also with a draw.

In his commentary Botvinnik gives a cautious, intuitive conclusion: after 39...♖c5 'in this case too White retains saving chances.' Obviously he was not completely sure that this position would have a favourable outcome for him, sensing certain dangers. Well then, let's check it on the computer! We will begin with the last variation and instead of 50...♖e8 play 50...♖b6! 51 e6 ♖b1 52 ♖xc2+ ♔xc2 53 ♔e5 ♖f1!

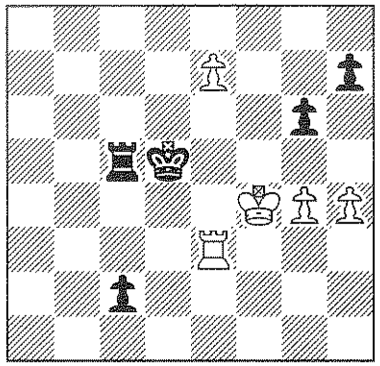


Analysis diagram

A completely incredible occurrence: this is a copy of a little study from the aforementioned Lasker-Rubinstein game with colours reversed! A fantastic coincidence of possible positions in the games of great players (and also very important games!) – cf. the analysis diagram on p.208 of Volume 1.

Turning the board round, we discover the only way to draw, one that is uncommonly pretty: 54 g5!! (54 e7? is bad because of 54...g5!! 55 e8♕ ♖e1+ 56 ♔f5 ♖xe8 57 ♔xg5 ♔d3 58 ♔f6 ♖f8+! 59 ♔e5 ♖g8 60 ♔f5 ♔d4 61 g5 ♔d5 62 ♔f6 ♔d6 63 g6 ♖f8+ 64 ♔g7 ♔e7 and wins) 54...♔d3 55 e7 ♔c4 (55...♖f3 56 e8♕ ♖e3+ 57 ♔f6 ♖xe8 58 ♔xg6) 56 e8♕ ♖e1+ 57 ♔f6 ♖xe8 58 ♔xg6 with a draw.

Thus 40...♖c8?! is not good enough for a win, and it only remains to check another variation – 40...♔d5! 41 ♖e3 (clearly inferior is 41 e6? ♔xe6 42 ♔e4 ♔d6 43 ♔d4 ♖d5+) 41...c3 42 e6 (42 ♖e1? ♖c4+ 43 ♔f3 c2) 42...c2 43 e7.



Analysis diagram

43...g5+! A spectacular resource, recently pointed out by one of the readers of the magazine *New in Chess* (2001, No.8) – as is apparent, Dutch patriots have not calmed down even in the 21st century! Indeed, after 44 hxg5? (to say nothing of 44 ♔f3? or 44 ♔g3?) White's position collapses: 44...c1♕ 45 e8♕ ♖c4+ 46 ♔f3 ♕f1+ 47 ♔g3 ♕g1+ 48 ♔f3 ♕xg4+ 49 ♔f2 ♕h4+ with mate.

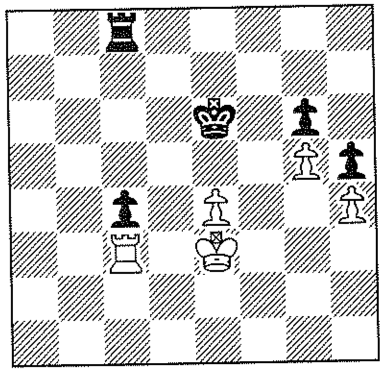
44 ♔xg5 also appears to lose, because of 44...♔d4+ 45 ♔f4 ♖c8! 46 ♖e1 ♖e8, for example: 47 g5 ♖xe7 48 ♖c1 ♔d3 49 h5 ♖b7 50 g6 h6! 51 ♔f5 ♖b5+ 52 ♔f6 ♖xh5 and ...♖g5. Therefore Timman approved the reader's analysis: 'As far as I can judge, this is an important contribution to endgame theory.'

However, this last variation suggested to me the idea of holding down the h7-pawn with the king – 47 ♖c1! ♔c3(d3) 48 ♔g5! ♖xe7 49 ♔h6! and the position is a draw: 49...♖e4 50 ♔xh7 ♖xg4 51 h5 ♔d2 52 ♖xc2+

♔xc2 53 h6, or 49...♔d2 50 ♖xc2+ ♔xc2 51 g5 ♖e4 (51...♔d3 52 h5 ♔e4 53 g6) 52 h5 ♖h4 53 g6 hxg6 54 ♔xg6. Incidentally, this draw was also discovered by a technically-equipped *New in Chess* reader (2002, No.1)

Therefore, Botvinnik's intuition did not deceive him: a couple of moves before the adjournment Euwe only missed some practical winning chances. However, even after 39...h6 the ex-world champion rated his position very optimistically...

40 g5! h5 41 ♔e3



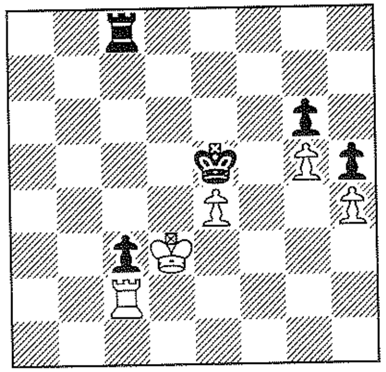
The sealed move. Of course, both players knew that Lasker had won a similar ending against Rubinstein (St Petersburg 1914). But there the h-pawns were absent, and as analysis showed, their presence changes the evaluation!

According to the leader of the Soviet delegation, Gavriil Veresov, a joint analysis of the adjourned position was made by the entire group of Soviet players who were participating in Groningen, that is Botvinnik, Smyslov, Boleslavsky, Kotov and Flohr. However, Smyslov does not confirm his participation: 'Botvinnik was very fortunate: he found a draw in the adjourned position of his game with Euwe, although everyone thought that he was losing. We had dinner together, and all the time Mikhail Moiseevich was analysing the position on his pocket set; he was very nervous...'

The adjournment session turned into something of a spectacle. 'With my head lowered I appeared in the hall,' Botvinnik recalls. 'Two thousand Dutchmen stood for an hour and a half, without moving: each was afraid of losing his place and not seeing the capitulation of the Soviet champion. Euwe condescendingly and sympathetically slapped me on the shoulder; with a crushed look I nodded in reply – as if to say that I understood everything. If the great Rubinstein had been unable to save such an endgame, then the result of the game was obvious...'

41...♔e5 42 ♖c2! c3 43 ♔d3

'Here my opponent looked at me suspiciously. Evidently he did not like the fact that I was so calm. Euwe examined the position for a long time.' (Botvinnik) In my opinion, the main thing that is apparent from this sketch is the standard of adjournment analysis in those times...

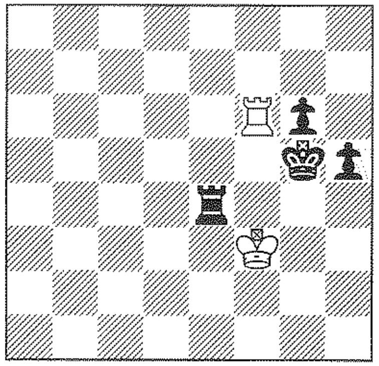


43...♖d8+

Lasker won against Rubinstein (without the h-pawns) by the manoeuvre ...♖c7-h7-h3-g3. Moreover, it was not possible to take the c3-pawn, since there the pawn endgame was lost. But here, and this is the whole point, it is drawn: 43...♖c7 44 ♖xc3! ♖xc3+ 45 ♔xc3 ♔xe4 46 ♔c4 ♔f4 47 ♔d4 ♔g4 48 ♔e5 ♔xh4 49 ♔f6! ♔g4 50 ♔xg6 h4 51 ♔f6 h3 52 g6 h2 53 g7 h1♕ 54 g8♕+.

44 ♔e3! (44 ♔xc3?! ♔xe4 is dangerous) **44...♖d4 45 ♖xc3 ♖xe4+ 46 ♔f3 ♖xh4 47 ♖c6! ♖f4+** (or 47...♔f5 48 ♖c5+ ♔e6 49 ♖c6+) **48 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 49 ♔f3 ♔f5 50**

♖f6+ ♔xg5



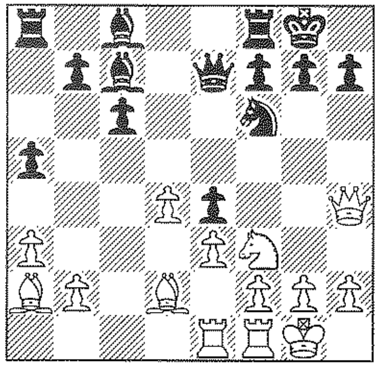
51 ♖xg6+! ½-½

'A deathly silence – the spectators were dumbfounded. Without this draw it would probably have been impossible to stage the 1948 match-tournament for the world championship.' (Botvinnik)

However, the battle for victory in the tournament did not end there: Euwe won five games in a row and four rounds before the finish he was a point ahead of Botvinnik! The latter then had to score three wins in a row to go half a point ahead. The last round became the culmination of this fascinating race: the tired Botvinnik lost to Najdorf, but Euwe failed to take his chance, losing to Kotov... The final scores of Groningen 1946 were: 1. Botvinnik – 14½ out of 19; 2. Euwe – 14; 3. Smyslov – 12½; 4-5. Najdorf and Szabo – 11½; 6-7. Boleslavsky and Flohr – 11 etc.

Now at last came the historic match-tournament. Euwe was the only player against whom Botvinnik had not previously won. But already in the second round, in his very first game (in the first round he was had the bye), the future world champion broke with this tradition! Of course, he was anxious: 'Would I really not manage to adapt to his game?' But in the event he created an original endgame, where his weak doubled e-pawns, supported by the bishops, turned out to be formidably strong.

Game 49
M.Botvinnik-M.Euwe
World Championship Match-Tournament,
The Hague/Moscow 1948



17 ♘e5! (17 ♘g5 h6 18 ♘h3 ♘d5 is equal) **17...♗xe5**

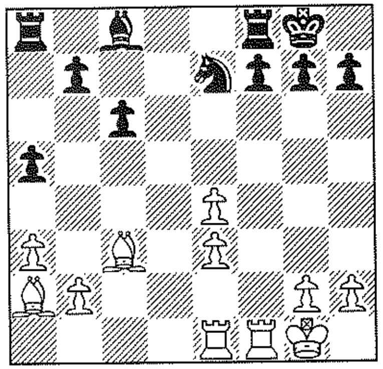
'It would have been better to decline the sacrifice and play 17...♗e6, in order to answer 18 ♗b1 with 18...♗d5. But in this case too, with 19 ♗c3 followed by f2-f4, White would have retained the advantage.' (Botvinnik) But in my view, after 19...♖fe8! Black simply has a good position. However, the capture of the pawn by no means loses.

18 dxe5 ♕xe5 19 ♗c3 ♕e7 (of course, not 19...♕h5?? 20 ♗xf6) **20 f3! ♘d5?**

A serious, if not decisive mistake. 'Euwe becomes nervous: he wants to suppress White's attack as quickly as possible, but he does not notice that the resulting ending is difficult for him. 20...exf3 would not have worked in view of 21 ♗b1 h6 22 ♖xf3 ♘d5 23 ♖g3!' (Botvinnik) with the sequel 23...♕xh4 24 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 25 ♖h7+ and 26 ♖h8 mate. This is pretty, but instead of 21...h6? Black equalises by 21...♖e8! 22 ♗xf6 (22 ♖xf3? ♘e4) 22...♕xf6 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 24 ♖xf3 ♕h6. So that 20...exf3! even works very well, since White also achieves little with 21 ♖xf3 ♘d5 22 ♕xe7 ♘xe7 23 ♖ef1 ♘d5.

Botvinnik considered 20...♗e6 essential, when after 21 ♗b1 ♘d5 22 ♕xe4 f5 and 23...♘xc3 'there would still have been all to play for'. Golombek suggested 21 fxe4! ♗xa2 22 ♖xf6! ♗e6 (22...gxf6?? 23 ♗xf6; 22...♔h8!? 23 ♕g3 ♖g8) 23 ♖g6?, overlooking the amusing 23...f6! But in my opinion, the correct continuation is 23 ♕g3! ♖ae8 24 ♖ef1 ♔h8 25 ♖6f4 f6 26 ♗xa5 with an obvious advantage.

21 ♕xe7 ♘xe7 22 fxe4



22...b6?

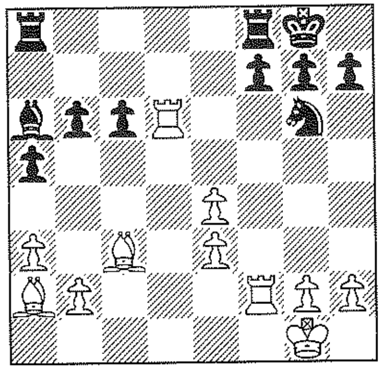
Botvinnik considered Black's position to be lost, giving the variations 22...♗e6 23 ♗xe6 fxe6 24 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 (24...♖xf8!? 25 ♗xa5 ♘g6 – Euwe) 25 ♖f1+! ♔g8 (25...♔e8 26 ♗xg7) 26 ♖d1 with the inevitable invasion on d7, and 22...♗g4 23 ♖f4! (less is promised by 23 ♖f2 ♗h5 24 ♖d2 b6 25 g4 ♗g6 26 ♖d7 ♖ae8 27 e5) 23...♗h5 (23...♗e6?! 24 ♗xe6 fxe6 25 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 26 ♖d1 and wins) 24 g4 ♗g6 (Golombek recommended 24...g5, but this is bad in view of 25 ♖f3 ♗xg4 26 ♖g3 ♗h5 27 ♖xg5+ ♗g6 28 h4 h6 29 ♖g3 h5 30 ♗f6) 25 h4 (or 25 ♖d1!? ♖ad8 26 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 27 ♗xa5) 25...h5 26 ♔h2 ♔h7 27 ♖g1 f6 28 gxh5 ♗xh5 29 e5! with a strong attack.

In Euwe's opinion, it is more tenacious to play 22...♘g6! 23 ♖d1 ♗e6 24 ♗xe6 fxe6 with an unpleasant, but perhaps tenable endgame, e.g. 25 ♖d7 ♖xf1+ 26 ♔xf1 ♖f8+ 27 ♔e2 ♖f7 28 ♖d6 (28 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 with equality) 28...♘f8 29 ♖d8 ♖d7 30 ♖b8 ♔f7 31 ♗xa5 ♘g6 etc.

23 ♖d1 ♘g6

Or 23...♗g4 24 ♖d6 ♖ac8 25 h3 ♗h5 26 g4 ♗g6 27 e5 etc. Euwe suggested 23...♗e6, but after 24 ♗xe6 fxe6 25 ♖d7 ♖xf1+ 26 ♔xf1 ♖f8+ 27 ♔e2 ♖f7 28 ♖d6 Black cannot hold the position.

24 ♖d6 ♗a6 25 ♖f2



25...♗b5?! (the final error in a difficult position; 25...♖ac8 26 ♖d7 ♘h8 27 e5 ♖ce8 28 e6 would not have saved Black, but slightly better was 25...♘e7 26 e5) **26 e5!** (with the threat of 27 e6 fxe6 28 ♖d7) **26...♘e7**

26...♖a7 27 e6 ♘h8 28 ♖f4! or 26...♖ae8 27 e6! fxe6 28 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 29 ♖d7 ♖xe6 30 ♖xg7! is also hopeless.

27 e4 c5 (27...♖ae8 ♖d7) **28 e6! f6** (or 28...fxe6 29 ♖xe6 ♖xf2 30 ♔xf2 ♔f8 31 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 32 ♖xe7+ ♔h8 33 ♖b7) **29 ♖xb6 ♗c6 30 ♖xc6! ♘xc6 31 e7+ ♖f7 32 ♗d5 1-0**

In the second cycle Botvinnik drew with Euwe and he finished the stage of the match-tournament held in The Hague as leader, with 6 out of 8; then came Reshevsky (4½), followed by Keres and Smyslov (4).

Then they all set off by train to Moscow and a two-week break was announced – a very rare occurrence in the modern history of the world championship! (For Karpov and me to move from London to Leningrad in 1986 it took a week, and from New York to Lyon in 1990 – 16 days, but there, after all, different continents were involved and time was required for acclimatisation).

'How can you conduct a tournament in this way?' Bronstein later asked indignantly. 'Imagine that, in a 10,000 metre race, after six thousand a break of two hours is suddenly announced, and then they all continue... I remember asking Keres: "Paul Petrovich, how was it that you allowed this?" He threw me such a glance that I was silenced! In fact, as it was everything was clear: Botvinnik said more than once that he couldn't last out for more than 15 games in a row...'

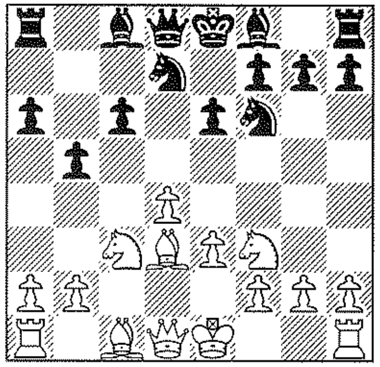
During his 'deserved rest' the Soviet champion was summoned to a meeting with the secretariat of the Communist Party Central Committee, to the office of Zhdanov himself, where Voroshilov, Suslov and other Kremlin bigwigs were present. 'We are afraid that the American Reshevsky will become world champion,' said Zhdanov. 'How would you view it if the other Soviet players were to lose to you deliberately?' According to Botvinnik, he initially rejected this outright, but when Zhdanov began insisting, he offered a compromise: 'Very well, let's leave the question open – perhaps this won't be needed?' Zhdanov happily agreed and added with emphasis: 'We wish *you* victory!'

Those times are also remembered in this account by grandmaster Alburt: 'Reshevsky delicately remarked that the Russians always play "as one team". But how could it have been any different, if on top board of this team the authorities were always playing? On the way from The Hague to Moscow, ex-world champion Max Euwe had his chess notebooks confiscated in Brest (*as Botvinnik writes, these were 'Euwe's secret opening analyses' – G.K.*). The customs officials, you see, imagined that this was code. At Botvinnik's request the notebooks were returned, and Euwe was touched and heartily grateful, but... copies of the notes somehow found their way to the Soviet grandmasters. The authorities played their game in excellent style.' (In my opinion, a similar style was also in fashion during Karpov's time).

The leader began the third cycle with a confident win over Euwe, after snaring him in the opening. Later he declared: 'This was undoubtedly my best game from the match-tournament.'

Game 50
M.Botvinnik-M.Euwe
World Championship Match-Tournament,
The Hague/Moscow 1948
Slav Defence D49

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♘c3 c6 (Euwe employs Botvinnik's own weapon against him) **5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 a6**



An old move. Most of the experts on this currently very popular opening prefer 8...♗b7, and some even try 8...b4, although the reputation of 8...a6 is still fairly high.

9 e4 c5 10 e5

'I had made a thorough study of this continuation. 10 d5 was known back in the 1920s, but at that time it did not receive a proper evaluation. Euwe knew, of course, that I did not employ it,' writes Botvinnik, who successfully played the Meran Variation with both colours: he always managed to create problems for his opponents. With regard to his opening analyses he often used the word 'thoroughly', although in the computer age this sounds slightly comical.

Incidentally, after 70 years of theoretical disputes a final choice has not in fact been made between 10 e5 and 10 d5 – in both cases Black is walking a tightrope, but he has excellent chances of seizing the initiative.

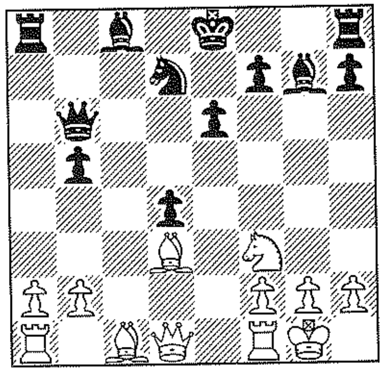
10...cxd4 (if 10...♘g4 White has the unpleasant 11 ♗g5!? ♕b6 12 ♗e4 ♗b7 13 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 14 0-0 h5 15 d5! with an attack, Botvinnik-I.Rabinovich, Leningrad 1926) **11 ♘xb5 axb5**

Mikhail Moiseevich himself played only 11...♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 axb5 with less complicated play.

12 exf6 ♕b6?!

From the perspective of the year 2000 it is clear that this is a second-rate choice, since 12...gxf6! gives Black far better practical results. For example: 13 0-0 (13 ♘xd4 ♕b6 14 ♗e3 ♗b4+) 13...♕b6 14 ♗e4 ♗b7 15 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 16 ♘xd4 ♖g8 17 f3 ♘e5 18 ♕e2 ♗c5 19 ♗e3 ♖d8 20 ♖ad1 ♘c4 21 ♗f2 ♕b6 22 b3 ♗xd4 23 bxc4 bxc4 24 ♖c1 ♗xf2+ 25 ♖xf2 ♖g5 26 ♕xc4 ♖gd5 with equality (Kamsky-Kramnik, Linares 1994).

13 fxg7 ♗xg7 14 0-0



At first sight Black has nothing to complain of: he has easy development and a pawn majority in the centre. But the safety of his king becomes a constant headache...

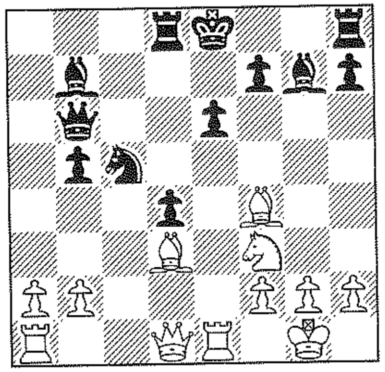
'All this had been prepared by me before the War,' writes Botvinnik, 'and tested in April 1939 in a training game with Ragozin. He played 14...♗a6, but after 15 b4 he got into difficulties. Euwe sticks to the recommendations of theory. How could he have known that they were wrong?'

14...♘c5?!

It is understandable that Black should want to exchange the dangerous d3-bishop as soon as possible, but in so doing he loses control of the important central squares. It is noteworthy that in this case simplification does not solve all Black's problems – while the queens are on the board, his king remains in danger. After 14...♗b7 White could have followed the same strategic course with the occupation of the key e5-square: 15 ♖e1 0-0 16 ♗f4 ♗d5 17 ♘e5 (Botvinnik also examined 17 ♕e2 b4 18 ♖ac1) 17...♘xe5 18 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♖xe5 (threatening ♗xh7+; if 19 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20 ♕h5 ♔g7! with equality) 19...f5 20 ♖xd5!? (20 ♕d2) 20...exd5 21 ♕b3 ♕c5 22 ♗xb5 ♖fb8 23 ♕g3+ with excellent play for the exchange.

15 ♗f4 ♗b7 (15...0-0? 16 ♗xh7+; 15...♘xd3 16 ♕xd3 0-0 17 ♖fe1 etc.) **16 ♖e1 ♖d8?**

Foreseeing the inevitable exchange of his g7-bishop, Euwe apparently thought it dangerous to castle, but with his king in the centre he will have even greater problems. A more consistent way to play was 16...♘xd3 17 ♕xd3 ♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 0-0, reducing the opponent's attacking potential. True, after 19 ♕g4!? (or 19 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 20 ♕g3 ♔h8 21 h4 Szabo-Foltys, Budapest 1948) and 20 ♗e5 White's position is clearly better: the strong passed pawn in the centre does not compensate Black for his insecure king.



17 ♖c1 ♖d5 18 ♗e5 (it transpires that the strange manoeuvre ...♖d8-d5 has merely played into White's hands: he carries out his plan with gain of tempo, and the exchange of one pair of rooks does not weaken the attack) **18...♗xe5?!**

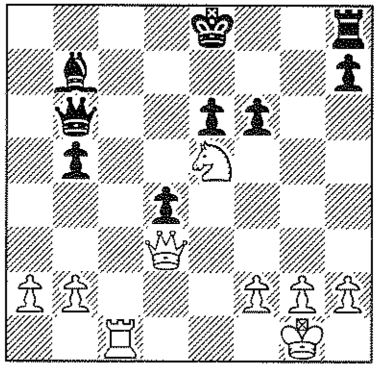
Again 18...0-0 was the lesser evil, although after 19 ♗xg7! (19 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20 b4!?) 19...♔xg7 20 ♘e5 (with the threat of ♖xc5, ♕g4+ and ♕h5) 20...♘xd3 21 ♕xd3 it is hard to offer Black any good advice: 21...f6? 22 ♖c7+! ♕xc7 23 ♕g3+ ♔h8 (23...♔h6 24 ♘g4+) 24 ♘g6+ hxg6 25 ♕xc7 and wins; 21...h6?! 22 ♖e4! ♕d6 23 ♖g4+ ♔f6 (23...♔h8? 24 ♕d2 and 25 ♖h4 mate) 24 f4, and the poor king is completely bare; 21...♔h8 22 ♕f3 f6 23 ♕f4 with the intention of ♕h6.

19 ♖xe5 ♖xe5

Another step towards ruin. The attempt to gain counterplay by 19...♖g8 does not work in view of 20 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xh7 ♖g4 22 h3, but by giving up his central pawn – 19...♘xd3 20 ♕xd3 ♕d6! 21 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 22 ♕xd4 0-0! (at last!), Black could have put up a tougher resistance.

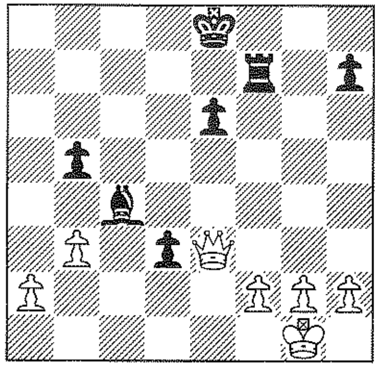
20 ♘xe5 ♘xd3 21 ♕xd3 f6

The attack on g2 is illusory: 21...♖g8 22 ♕xh7 ♖xg2+ 23 ♔f1, and Black can resign. By driving away the knight, Black is hoping to breath more freely. But this is a mirage...



The simple 22 ♘g4 retains a serious initiative. An analysis that I carried out with the computer program Fritz confirmed my suspicions: White has a winning attack. But the reality proved even more bleak!

22 ♕g3! (White does not begrudge the knight: the invasion of his two heavy pieces on the seventh rank is fatal for Black) **22...fxe5 23 ♕g7 ♖f8 24 ♖c7 ♕xc7** (alas, 24...♕d6 fails to 25 ♖xb7 d3 26 ♖a7 ♕d8 27 ♕xh7) **25 ♕xc7 ♗d5 26 ♕xe5 d3 27 ♕e3 ♗c4 28 b3 ♖f7**



29 f3!

Having seen a crystal-clear way to win, Botvinnik does not wish to waste time calculating variations such as 29 bxc4 ♖d7 30 ♕xe6+ ♔d8.

29...♖d7 30 ♕d2 e5 31 bxc4 bxc4 32 ♔f2 ♔f7 (the pawn endgame after 32...c3 33 ♕xc3 d2 34 ♕c8+ ♔e7 35 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 36 ♔e2 does not require any commentary) **33 ♔e3 ♔e6 34 ♕b4 ♖c7 35 ♔d2 ♖c6 36 a4 1-0**

In the fourth cycle the two players shared the point. And then a draw with Euwe in the fifth cycle, on 9 May 1948, gave Botvinnik the title of world champion ahead of schedule, three rounds before the finish. As eyewitnesses recall, the excitement and noise in the Hall of Columns was indescribable – the other game even had to be stopped...

The winner won all his mini-matches: against Smyslov by 3-2, against Keres by 4-1, and against Reshevsky and Euwe by 3½-1½. The success against the 'uncomfortable' opponent Euwe was an important component of his overall triumph. 'There is no doubt that, had I been unable to overcome this psychological barrier, I would not have succeeded overall,' Botvinnik himself was convinced. However, the Dutchman had already passed the peak of his chess career, as the final results of the match-tournament indicate: 1. Botvinnik – 14 out of 20; 2. Smyslov – 11; 3-4. Keres and Reshevsky – 10½; 5. Euwe – 4.

In the summer of 1981, not long before his death, Euwe was to write: 'Botvinnik, a great combinative player, subtle positional master and connoisseur of the endgame, is a versatile fighter, belonging to the small group of players of extra-class... For many years I have had the fortune of remaining a friend of Botvinnik. Although he, possibly more than others, wanted me to become FIDE President, I was more than once sharply criticised by him for certain decisions. Botvinnik's comments always gave food for thought and they sometimes forced me to change my decisions. Differences of opinion never interfered with our friendship.'

Cunning Devik

Thus the 1948 match-tournament was the logical conclusion of Botvinnik's domination of the post-war chess scene. I have already spoken about his 'historic luck', and about the fact that in this configuration – a match-tournament of five, without any preliminary qualification – he had no rivals. Botvinnik was able to avoid any accidents, and achieve a victory that was both logical and convincing. He not only won the crown, but also became the clear leader of world chess. After which... he concentrated entirely on his doctor's dissertation and did not play in any tournaments for three whole years(!).

During this time the rules for conducting the world championship, worked out by the champion himself and approved at the FIDE Congress (Paris 1949), came into force. For the first time there was a three-year cycle and an orderly qualifying system: Zonal tournaments, then an Interzonal, and after it a Candidates tournament – and a match of 24 games for the crown. In the event of a draw (12-12) the champion was to retain his title, while if he lost he had the right three years later to play a match-tournament for the world championship with the new champion and the next challenger (in 1956 the champion simply gained the right to a return match instead of this).

The first FIDE qualifying cycle produced some new heroes – David Bronstein (born 1924) and Isaak Boleslavsky (1919-1977), who squeezed out the recognised favourites. Especially dramatic was the rise of the young Bronstein, a player of vivid, distinctive style, to some extent a forerunner of Tal: victory in the first Interzonal tournament (Saltsjöbaden 1948), two gold medals in successive USSR Championships (1948 and 1949), a splendid finish in the Candidates tournament (Budapest 1950: 1-2. Bronstein and Boleslavsky – 12 out of 18; 3. Smyslov – 10; 4. Keres – 9½), then a win in the additional match with Boleslavsky (7½-6½) and qualification for a battle with Botvinnik.

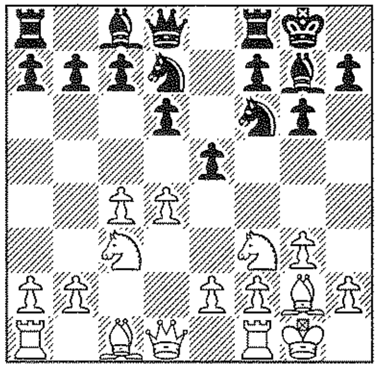
This signified a serious change in the situation in the chess world: a new generation had arrived. And more important – chess itself had begun to change. The 1938 AVRO tournament had marked some qualitative improvements, but the Second World War halted the irreversible process. True, in the USSR chess life did not die down even during wartime, the momentum begun back in the 1920s continued, and in the end the slogan 'Chess to the masses!' bore fruit: in the mid-1940s the Soviet Union made a sharp burst forward and seized world supremacy.

The strength of the new leaders was shown by the tournament in Groningen 1946 (where all five Soviet participants finished in the top ten, including first and third places) and the famous USSR-USA matches, which surprisingly ended in crushing defeats for the Americans – four times Olympiad champions. In addition the USSR Championships of those years demonstrated that after Botvinnik, Flohr, Keres and Smyslov a mighty young generation was lining up.

Also ranking with this was the victorious Moscow-Prague match (spring 1946), where Bronstein shone, scoring 10½ out of 12 and gaining two historic wins. As David Ionovich himself writes: 'Both games are very famous – I made the King's Indian Defence famous! I think that in any case it would have become famous, but it so happened that these games were the "big explosion" with which modern chess began.'

Game 51
L.Pachman-D.Bronstein
Moscow-Prague Match 1946, 2nd round
King's Indian Defence E68

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♘c3 e5 4 ♘f3 ♘bd7 5 g3 g6 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0



8 b3?!

A move that typifies the first steps in the theory of this variation: the bishop at b2 neutralises the g7-bishop and after a possible dxe5, ♘d5 and an exchange of knights on d5 the c7-pawn will become weak. But 8 b3 determines White's plan rather early and gives Black a target on the queenside: ...a7-a5-a4! The best ways for White were not known at that time – however, even today these positions contain some unresolved mysteries (8 e4 – *Games Nos.57, 94 and 128*).

8...♖e8 9 e4 exd4 10 ♘xd4

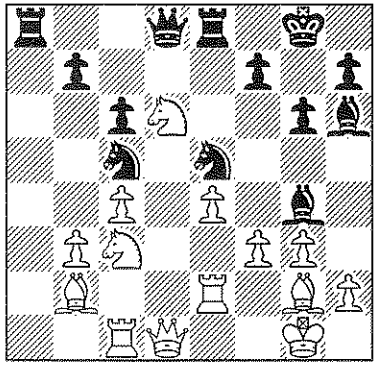
'Following the example of Alekhine, this position was thought to be hopeless for Black: he is huddled on the back three ranks, and in addition White controls the d5-square, since the move ...c7-c6 is ruinous for the d6-pawn... Fortunately, I was able to change this opinion!' (Bronstein)

10...♘c5 11 ♖e1 a5 12 ♗b2 a4 (12...c6!?) **13 ♖c1?!**

If 13 b4?!, then 13...a3! is unpleasant, but at c1 the rook is liable to come under attack from the black knights, and therefore 13 ♖b1! is correct, defending the b2-bishop. Generally speaking, White's entire construction is very brittle and hanging, and he has to play very carefully in case it should suddenly collapse.

13...c6?!

I would have included 13...axb3!? 14 axb3. Now the typical thrust 14...♘g4 is justified after 15 ♘db5? ♘e5 16 ♖e3 (16 ♘d5? c6) 16...c6 17 ♘xd6 ♗g4 18 f3 ♗h6! (18...♗xf3!? 19 ♗xf3 ♗h6) 19 ♖e2.



Analysis diagram

19...♗xf3! (but not 19...♘xf3+? 20 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 21 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 22 ♘d5!! cxd5 23 ♕d4 f6 24 ♕xf6 ♗xe2 25 ♕h8+ ♔f7 26 ♕f6+ with perpetual check) 20 ♗xf3 ♗xc1 21 ♗xc1 ♖e6 22 ♖d2 ♘xf3+ 23 ♕xf3 ♖xd6, or 20 ♘xe8 ♗xc1 21 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 22 ♗xc1 ♗xe2 23

♘f6+ ♔g7 24 ♗g5 ♘e6 and wins. King's Indian dynamics for you!

But in fact here 14...♘g4 is not so good on account of the regrouping 15 ♖c2! ♘e5 16 ♖d2. On the other hand, after 14...c6! 15 ♖a1 ♖xa1 16 ♗xa1 ♕b6 Black has nothing to complain about.

14 ♗a1?!

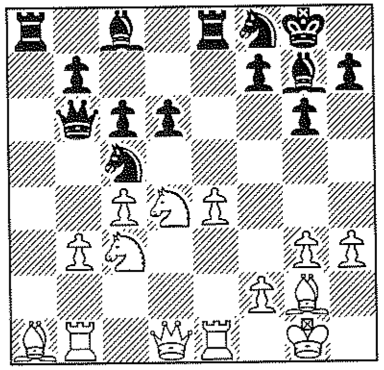
To say nothing of the solid 14 h3 ♕b6 15 ♖b1, it was far stronger to play 14 b4! a3 15 ♗a1 ♘cd7 16 b5, retaining the initiative: 16...♘e5 17 bxc6 bxc6 18 f4 ♘xc4 19 ♘xc6 ♕b6+ 20 ♕d4 ♕xc6 (20...♕xd4+?! 21 ♘xd4 ♗b7 22 ♘cb5 is inferior) 21 ♘d5 (21 e5 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♕d7 23 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 24 ♗xa8 ♘dxe5 is unclear) 21...♘h5 22 e5 dxe5 23 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 24 ♖xc4.

14...axb3 15 axb3 ♕b6

Black has achieved an ideal structure: he has created a weakness on b3, established his knight at c5 and gained control of the a-file. 16...♘g4 is threatened.

16 h3 ♘fd7 17 ♖b1 ♘f8!?

To 17...♘e5 there was the reply 18 ♖e3, so Black maintains the tension. 'I call this Lasker's move: in the Queen's Gambit he liked to place his knight alongside his king – on the very square f8.' (Bronstein)



18 ♔h2

A natural move, which is hard to criticise. The position resembles a coiled spring: the problem is that any activity by White will merely create additional weaknesses for him.

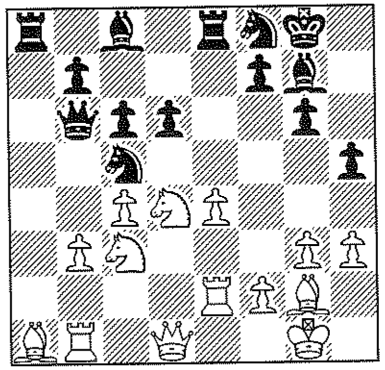
This highly important discovery signified a new level of understanding in chess! Long before Steinitz had said that 'an attack has chances of success only when the opponent's position is weakened,' and he advised caution when advancing pawns, since otherwise they may prove weak. But that was a general directive – now its live embodiment appeared: Black has set up a concrete opening scheme, disclosing the deep meaning of the Steinitzian philosophy. It is on such a continuity of ideas that the entire history of chess development is based.

18...h5!

Also a surprise – according to the classical rules (however, it appears that Black did everything not according to these rules!). Bronstein liked attacking with this pawn and he admitted: 'I always try to use it as a battering-ram.'

19 ♖e2?!

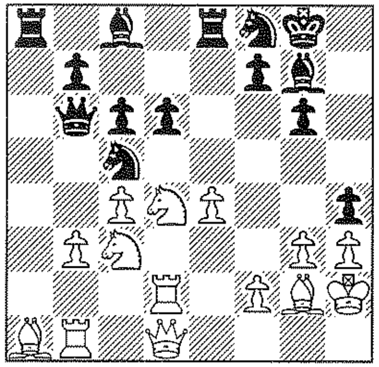
As before, Pachman does not find any plan and he makes 'natural' moves. It is dangerous to play 19 h4?! (the g4-square!) 19...♘h7 etc., whereas if 19 b4 there is 19...♖xa1! 20 ♖xa1 ♕xb4 21 ♖e3 ♕xc4 with a couple of pawns for the exchange and excellent prospects. Even so, it was better to play 19 ♕d2 h4 20 gxh4 (an ugly move, but 20 g4?! is even worse) 20...♘cd7 21 ♖ed1 ♕c5 22 ♔g1 ♕h5 23 ♕g5 ♕h8 with an unclear game.



19...h4 20 ♖d2?

An oversight. Since 20 g4?! ♗e5+ 21 ♔h1 ♘ce6 with the occupation of the f4-square was unfavourable for White, 20 ♖c2 was essential, with an inferior but still defensible position. I should point out that, although he seemingly did not make any mistakes, White was already in difficulties by the 20th move.

'The most interesting thing – and this is one of the most original and valuable ideas of the King's Indian Defence – is that the rook at a8 and bishop at c8 are splendidly developed, without making a single move and standing on their original squares.' (Bronstein)



20...♖xa1!

The very first move by the rook is decisive! In the words of David Ionovich, 'this bishop was holding White's entire position together.'

21 ♖xa1 ♗xd4 22 ♖xd4 ♘xb3 23 ♖xd6

(23 ♖d2 was probably more tenacious, but the position is already hopeless)

23...♕xf2!

Pachman was hoping for 23...♘xa1? 24 ♘d5! ♕xf2 25 ♘f6+ ♔h8 26 ♘xe8.

24 ♖a2

'A pretty mate would have followed after 24 ♕xb3 hxg3+ (the prosaic 24...♕xg3+ and ...♕xd6 is also possible) 25 ♔h1 ♗xh3! 26 ♖g1 ♗xg2+ 27 ♖xg2 ♕f1+ 28 ♖g1 ♕h3 mate! 24 ♖d3 was relatively best, although here too after 24...♘xa1 25 ♕xa1 ♘d7 and ...♘e5 there is no way of saving the game.' (Bronstein)

24...♕xg3+ 25 ♔h1 ♕xc3 26 ♖a3 ♗xh3!

And the first move with the bishop concludes matters! However, Black would also have won by 26...♖xe4!? 27 ♗xe4 ♕xh3+ 28 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 29 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 30 ♔g1 ♗g4 (a subtle manoeuvre!) 31 ♕xb3 ♕xd6.

27 ♖xb3 ♗xg2+ 28 ♔xg2 ♕xc4 29 ♖d4 ♕e6 30 ♖xb7 ♖a8 31 ♕e2 h3+! 0-1

A game that opened a new page in the development of chess thinking.

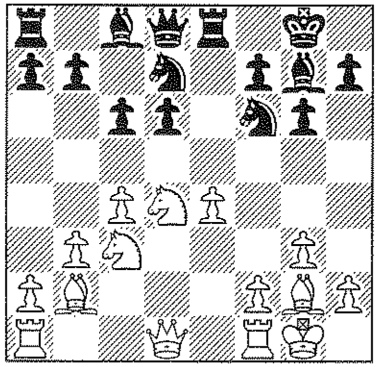
A few days later in the same event, as if by the waving of a magic wand, a twin game was played. Bronstein's next opponent was apparently also attracted by the ideas expressed in the notes to White's eighth and 10th moves of the previous game.

Game 52

F.Zita-D.Bronstein

Moscow-Prague Match 1946, 6th round
King's Indian Defence E68

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 d6 4 d4 ♘bd7 5 g3 g6 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 b3?! ♖e8 9 ♗b2 c6 10 e4 exd4 11 ♘xd4



11...♕b6 (11...♘c5!?) **12 ♕d2**

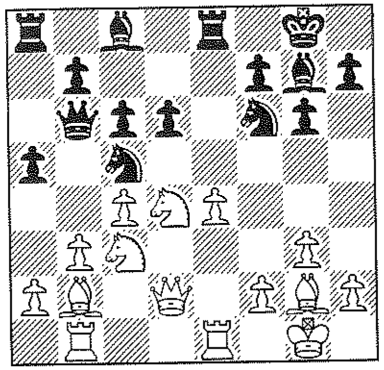
The weakening of the b3-pawn could have been avoided by 12 ♕c2, not fearing 12...♕xd4? in view of 13 ♘a4.

12...♘c5 13 ♖fe1 a5

Compared with the previous game Black has changed his move order somewhat: first he played ...c7-c6, ...♕b6 and did not hurry with ...a7-a5-a4, so as not to give the opponent the opportunity for b3-b4.

14 ♖ab1

It made sense to play 14 ♘c2!?, when if 14...a4 (not 14...♘fxe4? 15 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 ♗xb2 17 ♘f6+), then 15 b4 ♘e6 with a complicated game.

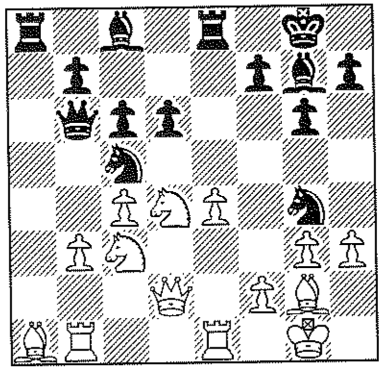


14...a4! 15 ♗a1?!

'The bishop is convinced that lightning never strikes in the same place twice.' (Bronstein) An experienced master would have preferred 15 ♘xa4 ♘xa4 16 bxa4 (although, of course, after 16...♕a5 Black has not even a hint of any problems), but Zita does not want to spoil his pawns.

15...axb3 16 axb3 (16 ♘xb3!?) **16...♘g4!** (exploiting the absence of h2-h3) **17 h3?**

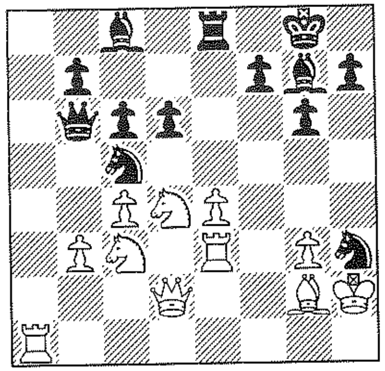
The only chance was 17 ♖ed1! ♘e5 18 h3 h5 with the idea of ...h5-h4 and sharp play.



17...♖xa1! (other nuances, but the same introduction!) **18 ♖xa1 ♘xf2!!**

A blow against the key point. 'In this combination geometric motifs are clearly seen: the knight at d4 is as though the apex of a pyramid, or even two pyramids: a white one with the base ♔g1, ♖a1 and a black one with the base ♕b6, ♗g7.' (Bronstein)

19 ♖e3 (both 19 ♔xf2 ♘xb3 and 19 ♕xf2 ♘d3 would have led to catastrophe on the d4-square) **19...♘xh3+! 20 ♔h2**



20...♘f2!

'In a winning position it is easy to make pretty moves.' (Bronstein) The black cavalry destroys White's defences.

21 ♖f3 (21 ♕xf2 ♗xd4) **21...♘cxe4 22 ♕f4 ♘g4+ 23 ♔h1 f5 24 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 25 ♕xd6 ♖xd4 26 ♕b8 ♖d8,** and Black soon won.

These games spread right around the world, becoming Bronstein's calling card and genuine classics: in the early 1970s, when I was trying to grasp the rudiments of chess mastery, they still created an enormous impression on me. The colourful cascade of sacrifices resembles a salute in honour of Victory Day! In that first post-war year, full of hopes and expectations, the fresh wind of King's Indian ideas burst into chess.

The wind blew from the Ukraine, with its rich chess traditions – first from Kiev, from where came Boleslavsky, Bronstein and their teacher Konstantinopolsky, a little later from Odessa, where Geller grew up, and then from Lvov, where Stein appeared... And it was not just a matter of the King's Indian Defence and not simply a change of generations, but that the new masters appeared with quite different chess baggage, having assimilated and creatively processed the rich heritage of the past.

This applied in particular to play with a disruption of the material balance. Thus Bronstein breathed new life into the ancient King's Gambit, which by the middle of the 20th century was considered an incorrect opening. According to ChessBase, during his entire career he played 33 serious games with it with a score +21 -5 =7. 'They taught me to play prettily,' said David Ionovich, as though excusing himself... The following enchanting encounter vividly reminds one of the era of Anderssen and Morphy.

Game 53

D.Bronstein-P.Dubinin

USSR Championship, Leningrad 1947

King's Gambit C39

1 e4 e5 2 f4

At the Interzonal Tournament in Saltsjöbaden (1948) Bronstein wanted to play this in his game with the legendary Savielly Tartakower, who was once called by Spielmann 'the last knight of the King's Gambit,' but alas, his opponent replied 1...c6.

Even so, the connection between the eras was not broken! In the France-USSR match (Paris 1954) Bronstein employed the gambit against the no less legendary Osip Bernstein, and after 2...♘f6 3 fxe5 ♘xe4 4 ♘f3 ♘g5 5 d4 (just think: 5 c3 ♘xf3+ 6 ♕xf3 ♕g5? 7 ♗e2! ♕xe5 8 0-0 occurred back in the game Chigorin-Bernstein, Kiev 1903) 5...♘xf3+ 6 ♕xf3 ♕h4+ 7 ♕f2 ♕xf2+ 8 ♔xf2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 (9 c3! d6 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♘d2 is better) 9...d6 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♘c3 ♗f5 Black had equalised (although he lost deep in the endgame).

2...exf4 (2...d5 – *Volume 1, Games Nos.7 and 52*) **3 ♘f3**

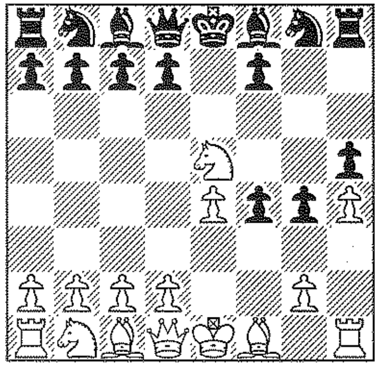
Again Black is at a crossroads.

3...g5

The modern defence is to return the pawn for the sake of rapid development: 3...d5 4 exd5 ♘f6 5 ♗b5+ c6! (but not 5...♘bd7?! Bronstein-Ragozin, Saltsjöbaden Interzonal 1948) 6 dxc6 bxc6 (6...♘xc6!?) 7 ♗c4 ♘d5 (7...♗d6 8 ♕e2+!) 8 d4?! (according to Spassky, it is better to play 8 0-0 ♗d6 9 ♘c3! ♗e6 10 ♘e4 or 8 ♘c3!) 8...♗d6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♗g4 (or 11...♘d7!? 12 ♗d3 c5 with equality Bronstein-Lilienthal, Moscow 1953) 12 ♕d3 ♘d7 13 g3 (13 ♗d2!?) 13...♘b6 with equality, and White lost in 25 moves (Bronstein-Botvinnik, 20th USSR Championship, Moscow 1952).

Bronstein lamented that he wrongly avoided 1 e4 in his match with Botvinnik, but the latter, as we see, was well prepared even in the King's Gambit. Later Botvinnik revealed his cards: it turned out that he had analysed this entire variation before the 1948 match-tournament for the world championship and had tested it in a secret training game with Ragozin (Bolshevo 1947).

4 h4 g4 5 ♘e5 h5?!

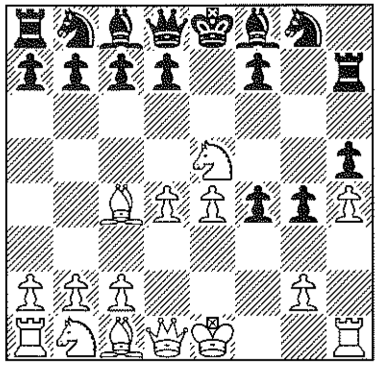


This defence from the Middle Ages, developed by Kieseritzky, is for some reason known as the 'long whip'. It is safer to play 5...d6 6 ♘xg4 ♘f6! (the source game: Planinc-Korchnoi, Moscow 1975) or immediately 5...♘f6!, as played by Anderssen (*Volume 1, Game No.5*), Morphy and Fischer.

6 ♗c4 ♖h7

6...♘h6?! 7 d4 d6 8 ♘d3 f3 9 gxf3 ♗e7 (or 9...gxf3 10 ♕xf3 ♗g4 11 ♕f2) 10 ♗e3 ♗xh4+ 11 ♔d2 favours White (Anderssen).

7 d4

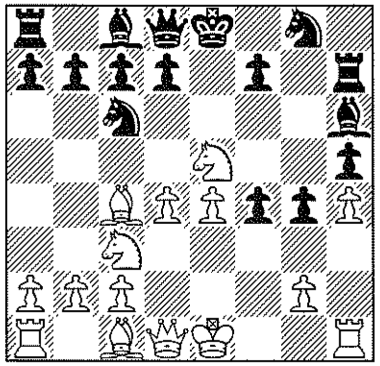


7...♗h6?!

An unsuccessful experiment. According to analysis by Jaenisch, 7...♗e7? is also bad after 8 ♗xf4 ♗xh4+ 9 g3 ♗g5 10 ♖xh5! ♖xh5 11 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 12 ♗xh5 ♗xf4 13 ♘g6+ ♔g7 14 ♘xf4 ♘f6 15 ♘c3 ♕e7 16 ♘fd5 and wins.

A thread extending from the mid-19th century runs 7...f3 (it is dangerous to play 7...d6 8 ♘xf7!? ♖xf7 9 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 10 ♗xf4) 8 gxf3 d6 9 ♘d3 ♗e7 (9...♘c6!?) 10 ♗e3 ♗xh4+ 11 ♔d2 gxf3 (or 11...♗g5 12 f4! and ♘c3) 12 ♕xf3 ♗g4 13 ♕f4 with more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

8 ♘c3 (8 ♘d3!?) **8...♘c6**

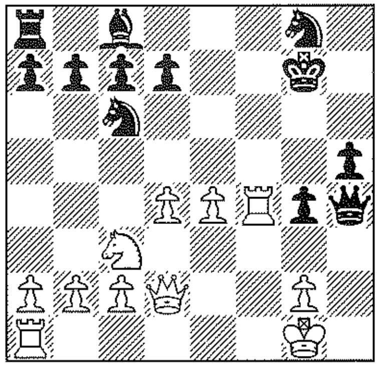


After initiating a 'new' defensive attempt, Dubinin runs into a refutation pointed out almost 100 years earlier by Jaenisch!

9 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 10 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 11 ♗xf4!

An excellent sacrifice, destroying Black's position. Here Jaenisch's analysis terminates – and pure improvisation begins. Very accurate, energetic play is demanded of White.

11...♗xf4 12 0-0 ♕xh4 13 ♖xf4+ ♔g7 14 ♕d2! (preventing 14...♕g5? in view of 15 ♖f7+)



14...d6

The machine 'looks' at the immediate 14...♘d8 15 ♖af1 ♘e6 16 ♖f7+ ♔h8 with the idea of 17 ♘d5? g3! 18 ♖1f5 b6, but after 17 ♘e2! g3 White wins by 18 ♖1f5 ♕h2+ 19 ♔f1 ♕h1+ (19...b6 20 ♘xg3!) 20 ♘g1 b6 21 ♕e2, while if 17...♕g5, then 18 ♕c3 ♘g7 19 d5 with an irresistible attack.

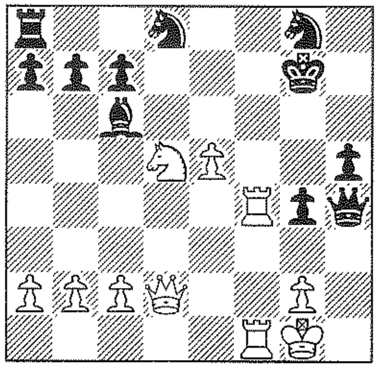
15 ♖af1 ♘d8 (with the aforementioned idea of counterplay; 15...♗e6? 16 d5 and wins) **16 ♘d5! ♗d7**

If 16...♗e6 there would have followed 17 ♘xc7 and ♘e8+ with crushing threats, while after 16...♘e6 Bronstein was intending 17 ♖f7+ ♔h8 18 ♘f6! ♘xf6 (18...♘g5 19 ♕xg5! ♕xg5 20 ♖h7 mate) 19 ♕h6+ ♔g8 20 ♖7xf6 winning.

17 e5!

A further opening of lines. White is threatening 18 ♘xc7 and 19 exd6, as well as 18 ♘f6! In the event of the 'greedy' 17 ♕e3 c6 18 g3 ♕g5! 19 ♖f7+ ♘xf7 20 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♕xg5 cxd5 22 ♕xh5+ ♔f6 23 ♕xd5 ♔e7 24 ♕xb7 ♖c8 25 c3 White retains the advantage, but he has clearly sold out too cheaply.

17...dxe5 (17...♖c8 18 ♘f6! ♗e6 19 ♘e8+! or 18...♗b5 19 ♖f5!+ and wins) **18 dxe5 ♗c6**



19 e6! (with the murderous threat of ♕d4+ or ♕c3+) **19...♗xd5 20 ♖f7+!?**

Instead of the prosaic 20 ♕xd5, and very much in the style of Morphy!

20...♘xf7 21 ♖xf7+ ♔h8 (if 21...♔g6 then 22 ♕d3+ would have led to a quick checkmate) **22 ♕c3+ ♘f6 23 ♖xf6 ♕xf6** (23...♕g5 24 ♖h6+ and mate on h8) **24 ♕xf6+ ♔h7 25 ♕f5+ ♔h6 26 ♕xd5 ♔g6 27 ♕d7 1-0**

It is not surprising that in the 1950 Candidates tournament it was the 'Kiev School' that triumphed: Bronstein and Boleslavsky had spurted ahead of the great Smyslov and Keres! Although Smyslov was still searching for his unique harmony (and later was to assume the leading role, after absorbing and processing the 'Kiev' experience), and Keres had not yet fully recovered from the psychological traumas of the war and post-war years, it remains a fact: at that time two 'two Bs' played more interesting chess than anyone (I should mention: despite difficult living conditions) and demonstrated the freshest ideas – in other words, their play personified most vividly the progress of chess thinking.

Here is another example of the triumph of mind over matter, seen so often in Bronstein's games. On this occasion he employed the very sharp Slav Gambit – and forced the entire variation out of tournament play for almost 20 years!

Game 54
D.Bronstein-A.Kotov
Candidates Tournament,
Budapest 1950, 3rd round
Queen's Gambit Declined D31

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c6 4 e4 dxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♗b4+ 6 ♗d2 ♕xd4 7 ♗xb4 ♕xe4+ 8 ♗e2 ♘a6 9 ♗c3!? (9 ♗d6; 9 ♗a5) **9...♘e7!**

9...f6 10 ♕d6! ♗d7 11 0-0-0 0-0-0 12 ♕g3 favours White (Bronstein-Szily, Moscow-Budapest match 1949).

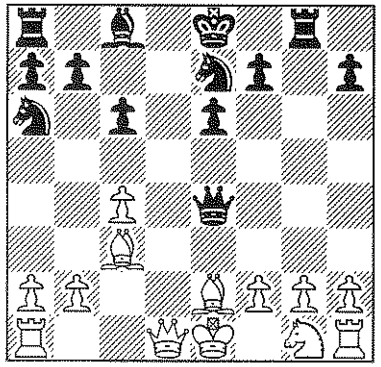
10 ♗xg7!

A bold novelty. A much quieter route is 10 ♘f3, as played by Marshall back in 1904, or 10 ♕d2 0-0 11 ♘f3 ♘g6 with equality (Lilienthal-Bronstein, 17th USSR Championship, Moscow 1949).

10...♖g8 (but not 10...♕xg2? 11 ♗f6! ♕xh1 12 ♕d6 0-0 13 ♕g3+ ♘g6 14 ♗f3 and wins)

11 ♗c3

Nowadays they have switched to playing 11 ♗f6.



11...♕xg2

Why not take the rook?! Only later was the following line found: 11...♘d5!? 12 cxd5

♕xg2 13 dxe6 ♗xe6 14 ♗f6 ♕xh1 15 ♕d6 ♖xg1+ 16 ♔d2 ♕d5+ 17 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♖xg1 ♔d7 19 ♖g7 ♖h8 20 ♗xa6 bxa6 21 ♖xf7+ with equality.

12 ♕d2! ♕xh1 (Black did not make his last move in order to retreat – 12...♕g5!?) **13 0-0-0 ♘d5!**

Kotov told how in his preparations for the game he terminated his analysis at this point: Black gains two rooks for the queen and a seemingly solid position. He would have lost quickly after 13...f6? 14 ♗h5+ etc.

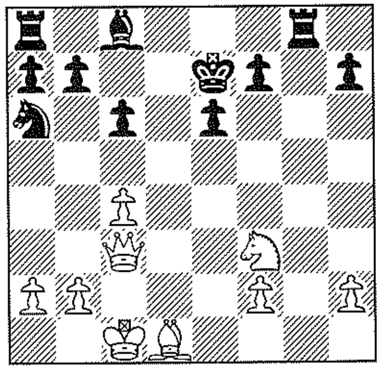
14 ♘f3 ♕xd1+?

An imperceptible, but serious mistake. Euwe gives 14...♕g2 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 ♕f4 ♗d7 17 ♗xa6 bxa6 18 ♖g1 'with a decisive advantage for White', although after 18...♕xg1+ 19 ♘xg1 ♖xg1+ 20 ♔d2 ♖c8 Black's chances are not worse.

15 ♗xd1 ♘xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♔e7

The counter-gambit 16...e5 17 ♕xe5+ ♗e6 hardly helps in view of 18 ♘g5 0-0-0 19 ♘xe6 ♖de8 20 ♗h5! ♖xe6 21 ♕f5 ♖g1+ 22 ♔c2 with an obvious advantage to White.

'Only here did David sink into thought. Many expected the obvious 17 c5 with the idea of ♗e2 and ♗xa6 and they couldn't understand what Bronstein was looking for,' recalls his second Boris Vainstein.



17 ♘e5!

The queen and knight create a very strong attack on the homeless king. For any respectable computer program this is the obvious move! But for a human the moves that come to mind are 17 ♘d2!?, with the idea of ♘c4, and 17 ♕e5!? (Dvoretsky).

17...♗d7

If 17...f6 White wins by 18 ♕h3! fxe5 (18...♖g7 19 ♕h6!) 19 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 20 ♗h5. Also insufficient is 17...♖g5 18 f4 ♖f5 (18...♖g1 19 ♘g4) 19 ♕g3 ♔f8 20 ♕h4 ♘b4 (20...f6 21 ♕h6+ ♔e8 22 ♘g4!) 21 ♕xh7 ♘xa2+ 22 ♔b1 ♘b4 23 ♗g4 ♖f6 24 ♕h4.

18 ♕a3+! c5 19 ♕f3! (a pendulum queen!) **19...♖ad8** (19...f6 20 ♘xd7) **20 ♕xf7+ ♔d6 21 ♕f4! ♖df8 22 ♘f7+ ♔e7 23 ♗h5 ♗c6 24 ♕d6+ ♔f6 25 ♘h6 ♖g1+ 26 ♔d2 ♔g7 27 ♘g4**, and White won quickly.

Two rounds before the finish of Budapest 1950 Bronstein was a point behind Boleslavsky, but he managed to gain two wins 'to order' (the second one – over Keres) to catch up with his friend. In order to decide on the challenger to the throne, they now had to contest an additional match.

The tone to this interesting 'friendly' event was set by the very first game, where Bronstein carried out a bold exchange sacrifice in the opening, which engaged the minds of theoreticians for a long time afterwards.

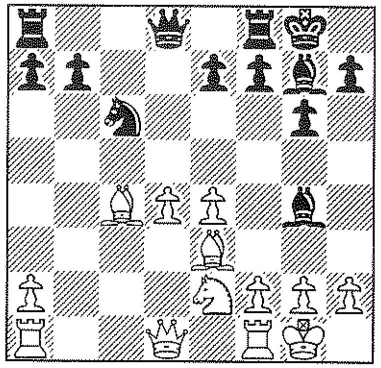
Game 55
D.Bronstein-I.Boleslavsky
Candidates Play-Off Match,
Moscow 1950, 1st game
Grünfeld Defence D89

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 c5 7 ♗c4 ♗g7 8 ♘e2 0-0 9 0-0 cxd4

The theory of the Grünfeld Defence was then only beginning to be developed. Nowadays Black doesn't hurry with the exchange on d4, but first plays 9...♘c6 10 ♗e3 ♗g4 (10...♕c7 – *Games Nos.91 and 99*) 11 f3 ♘a5 and only after 12 ♗d3 – 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗e6, since in the event of 12 ♗d5 or 12 ♗xf7+ he has additional possibilities. Over the years such opening nuances have become increasingly significant.

10 cxd4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♗g4

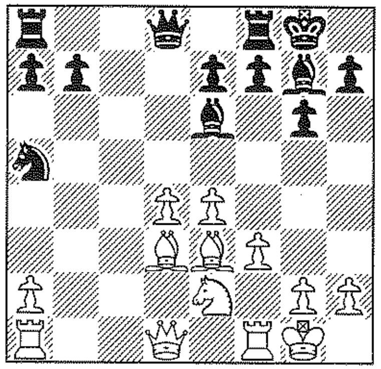
An important inclusion. If immediately 11...♘a5?! 12 ♗d3 ♗e6, then 13 d5! ♗xa1 14 ♕xa1 f6 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♘f4 ♗c8 18 e5! with a powerful attack (Sokolsky-Tolush, Omsk 1944). Incidentally, in this match Sokolsky was Boleslavsky's second...



12 f3 ♘a5 13 ♗d3

At that time 13 ♗xf7+!? ♖xf7 14 fxg4 was considered harmless, but in battles against me (Seville match 1987; Belfort 1988) Karpov showed that this pragmatic scheme with the win of a pawn is quite dangerous for Black.

13...♗e6



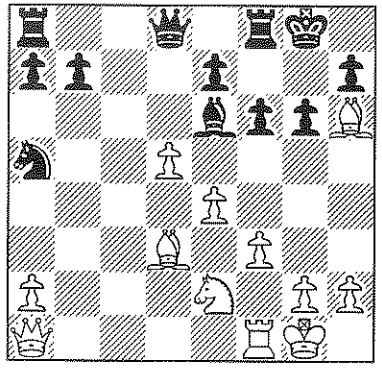
14 d5!?

Sense the difference in style: some look to see where they can grab a pawn, whereas others sacrifice the exchange with unclear consequences!

Later, when this idea had been neutralised, 14 ♖c1 ♗xa2 15 ♕a4!? became very popular (Geller-Lilienthal, 21st USSR Championship, Kiev 1954). Thus Yusupov and Beliavsky played this against me (55th USSR Championship, Moscow 1988) and I should also mention games from the Kramnik-Shirov match (Cazorla 1st and 5th matchgames 1998).

14...♗xa1 15 ♕xa1 f6 16 ♗h6

The critical point of the game.



16...♕b6+?!

'Because of this check, the exchange sacrifice was considered unfavourable for White. Indeed, in the event of 17 ♔h1 ♖fd8 Black retains the advantage and can defend successfully,' wrote Sokolsky in his notes to the game Bronstein-Boleslavsky (Budapest Candidates 1950), where after 17 ♘d4 ♗d7 18 ♖b1 ♕c5 19 ♖c1 ♕b6 20 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 21 h4 White, after regaining the exchange, achieved only a draw.

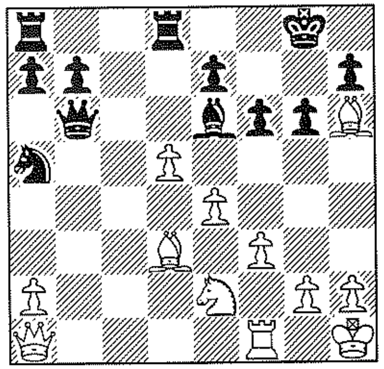
But after this new encounter between the friends and rivals the queen move was deemed to be a mistake and in its place came 16...♖e8! 17 ♔h1 ♗d7 18 e5 ♖c8 19 ♘f4 ♘c4 20 e6 ♗a4 (20...♘e5 21 exd7! ♕xd7 22 ♕b1) 21 ♘xg6! hxg6 22 ♗xg6 ♘e5 23 ♗e4! ♗c2 (after 23...♕a5?, Christiansen-Korchnoi, Reggio Emilia 1987/88, 24 ♕b2! is strong) 24 ♗xc2 ♖xc2 25 ♕d1! with sharp play: 25...♔h7 26 ♕xc2+ ♔xh6 27 f4 ♘g6 (Bannik-Novotelnov, Tbilisi 1951), or 25...♕c7 26 f4 ♖c1 27 ♕xc1 ♕xc1 28 ♖xc1 ♘g4 29 h3! ♘xh6 30 g4

(Kobalia-Zakhartsov, St Petersburg 2001).

Gradually the plan with the exchange sacrifice, leading to vast complications, began to occur less and less: it was just too risky!

17 ♔h1!? ♖fd8?

Contrary to Sokolsky's evaluation, this obvious move is bad! Black should return the exchange – 17...♗d7 (Karpov), and after 18 ♖b1 ♕d6 19 ♕c3 b6 20 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 21 ♗a6 White has only a minimal advantage.



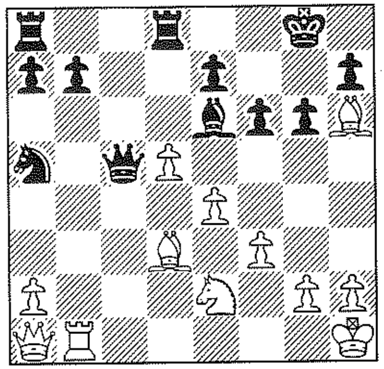
18 ♖b1!

The first of a serious of quite brilliant moves. 'The start of a forcing manoeuvre, in which White relies on his central pawns, like a sharp wedge dividing the board into two parts. He also makes use of strategic motifs such as the severance of communications in Black's position and the cramped position of his queen, which in addition is on the same diagonal as the stranded knight at a5 and the rook at d8.' (Vainstein)

18...♕c5?

Boleslavsky never stopped halfway! Especially since 18...♕d6? was bad due to 19 ♕c3 b6 20 ♗f4 ♕c5 21 ♕xc5 bxc5 22 ♗c7! and wins.

The commentators mentioned that 18...♕f2 19 ♕c3 ♗h3 does not work in view of 20 ♘f4!, but I am not convinced that White has a quick win: 20...♗d7! 21 ♕xa5 (21 d6 ♕h4 22 dxe7 ♖dc8 23 ♕xa5 ♕xh6 24 ♕d5+ ♔h8 25 ♕d6 ♕g5 26 ♘e2 ♗c6 27 f4 ♕h4 28 g3 ♕h6 29 ♕xf6+ ♕g7 is unclear) 21...♕h4 and the bishop is trapped – a nuance that was overlooked! Even so after 22 ♘e6! ♗xe6 23 ♗e3 b6 24 ♕a3 White's initiative is worth more than Black's extra exchange. But the move in the game loses by force.

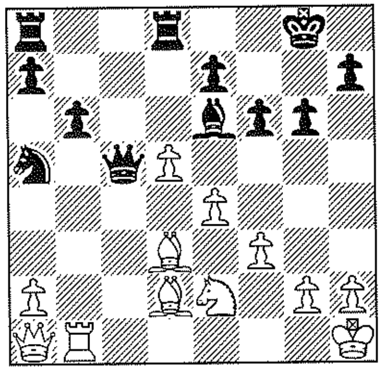


19 ♗d2!!

An unexpected retreat, found at the board and overlooked by the opponent. As if developing Alekhine's ideas, White plays over the whole board! Bronstein thought in positional categories that were still unknown to most players of that time, and it was not without reason that his colleagues nicknamed him 'cunning Devik'.

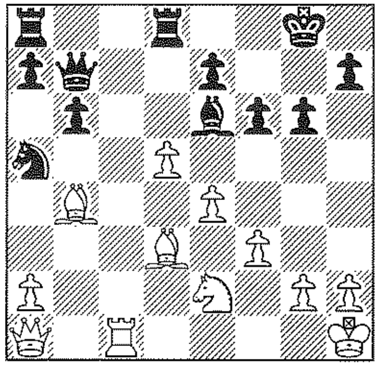
19...b6

If 19...♗d7, then 20 ♗b4 ♕e3 21 ♖d1! (21 ♕d4? ♕xd4 22 ♘xd4 e5!) 21...♗a4 22 ♗xa5 ♗xd1 23 ♕xd1 and wins.



20 ♗b4 ♕c7 (or 20...♕e3 21 ♕d4! ♕xd4 22 ♘xd4 ♗xd5 23 exd5 ♖xd5 24 ♗e4 and wins – Dvoretsky) **21 ♖c1 ♕b7**

It is also hopeless to play 21...♕d7 22 ♘d4 ♗f7 23 ♗b5 ♕b7 24 ♗xa5 (24 ♘c6!?) 24...bxa5 25 ♗c6 with a technically won position.



22 ♕b1!

Another splendid manoeuvre, with a double threat – ♗xa5 and dxe6. The paradox is that White wins by manoeuvring only within his own camp!

22...♖ab8?

Depressed by such a rapid change of scene, Boleslavsky gives up a piece. However, after 22...♗c8 23 ♘f4 (with the threat of e4-e5) 23...♖f8 (23...♕b8?! 24 ♗xe7) 24 ♕b2 ♕b8 25 d6 Black also has a difficult, objectively lost position.

23 dxe6 ♘c6 24 ♗c3 ♘e5 25 ♗b5 (now comes a precise finish) **25...♖bc8 26 ♗xe5 ♖xc1+ 27 ♕xc1 fxe5 28 ♗d7 ♕a6 29 ♘g3 ♕xa2 30 h4 ♖f8 31 ♕g5 ♖f6 32 ♕xf6! 1-0**

Bronstein's handling of this complicated set-up is delightful: after all, this was not the year 2000, but 1950. It was such games that developed opening theory!

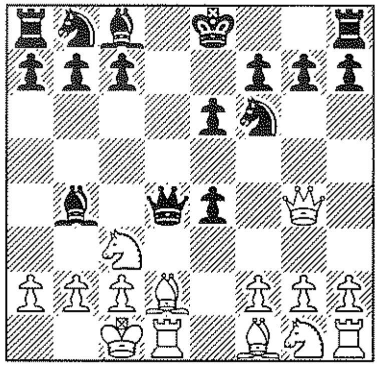
However, Boleslavsky then drew even and normal time ended with the match level at 5-5 (+2 -2 =6). Two additional games also ended in draws, after which play was to the first win – as they now say 'sudden death'. The 14th game proved decisive.

Game 56

I.Boleslavsky-D.Bronstein

Candidates Play-Off Match,
Moscow 1950, 14th game
French Defence C15

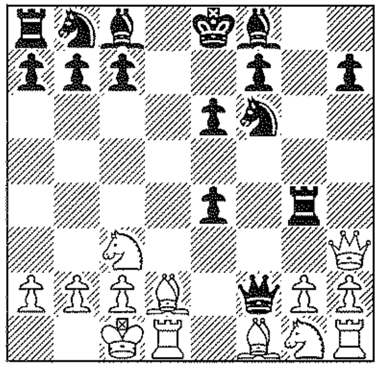
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♗d2!? (instead of the usual 4 e5 – a very sharp gambit!) **4...dxe4 5 ♕g4 ♕xd4 6 0-0-0 ♘f6**



7 ♕xg7 ♖g8 8 ♕h6 ♗f8!!

Another surprise for his friend and rival, this is a paradoxical idea of Bronstein and his second Konstantinopolsky.

9 ♕h4 (there is nothing better: 9 ♕e3? ♕xe3 10 ♗xe3 ♘g4!, 9 ♕h3 ♕xf2 or 9 ♕f4 ♗d6 etc.) **9...♖g4! 10 ♕h3 ♕xf2!**



11 ♘b5?

Confusion. If 11 ♗e3, then 11...♕h4 (11...♕f5!?) 12 ♕xh4 ♖xh4 13 ♗g5 ♗h6! But

11 ♗e2! is more shrewd, for example: 11...♖g6 12 g4 ♕c5! 13 ♗e3 (13 g5? ♖xg5!) 13...♕e5 14 ♗d4 ♕f4+ 15 ♗e3 with equality (Euwe), while after 11...♕xg2 12 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 13 ♕xg4 ♘xg4 14 ♘xe4 ♗d7 or 11... ♖h4!? 12 ♕xh4! ♕xh4 13 g3 ♕h6 (13...e3 14 gxh4 exd2+ is unclear) 14 ♗xh6 ♗xh6+ 15 ♔b1 ♗d7 Black has reasonable compensation for the exchange.

I came across the variation 11 ♗e2! ♖h4 12 ♕xh4! ♕xh4 13 g3 in 1973, when looking through Panov's *Course in the Openings*. The idea of trapping the queen greatly appealed to me, and I employed it in a candidate master norm tournament against candidate master Glazshtein. Alas, I did not keep the score of the game – I remember only that at first the position was unclear, then I was close to victory, but I was unable to win an endgame with rook and three pawns against bishop and three.

11...♘a6 12 ♔b1 ♗d7 13 ♗e3 (or 13 ♗c3 ♖h4!) **13...♕f5** and Black accurately converted his material advantage.

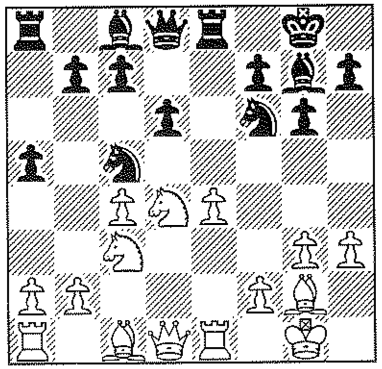
Thus Bronstein qualified for a match with Botvinnik and almost became world champion (as will be described below), but in the end he was forced to begin the new campaign for the crown with Zürich 1953, the Candidates tournament of the next cycle.

There he played another of his famous King's Indians – against Samuel Reshevsky. Here is Bronstein's introductory comment: 'In the 1930s-1940s the King's Indian Defence was employed by only a few players who wished to avoid the passive and well-studied variations of the Queen's Gambit. It is sufficient to say that in the 1948 match-tournament for the world championship it occurred in only two games out of 50. But here in Zürich 1953 one game out of every three begun with d2-d4 transposed into a King's Indian.'

Although seven years had already passed since the time of the above games with Pachman and Zita (*Games Nos.51 and 52*), no one had yet hit on a clear way for White to gain an advantage – not even Reshevsky, at that time the strongest Western grandmaster, who was battling with Smyslov, Bronstein and Keres for victory in the tournament (in the end he shared 2nd-4th places with the latter two).

Game 57
S.Reshevsky-D.Bronstein
Candidates Tournament,
Zürich 1953, 13th round
King's Indian Defence E69

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 ♖e8!? (8...exd4; 8...c6 – *Games Nos.94 and 128*) **9 h3** (9 ♗e3 ♘g4; 9 d5!?) **9...exd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘c5 11 ♖e1 a5**



By transposition of moves a *tabiya* of the 8...exd4 variation has been reached.

12 ♕c2

In my opinion, 12 ♖b1 is more useful, for example: 12...a4 13 b4 axb3 14 axb3 c6 15 b4 ♘e6 16 ♘de2 followed by ♗e3, or 12...c6 13 ♗f4!? (13 b3 Korchnoi-Geller, 26th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959) 13...a4 (13...♘h5 14 ♗e3) 14 b3 axb3 15 axb3 h6 (15...♘h5!? 16 ♗e3 ♖a3) 16 ♕c2 with prospects of an advantage (Petrosian-Quinteros, Manila 1974).

12...c6

12...a4! is more accurate, but not 12...♘g4 13 ♘b3! nor 12...♘fxe4?! 13 ♘xe4 ♗xd4 14 ♗g5 ♕d7 15 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 16 ♗xf6 with an attack on the dark squares.

13 ♗e3

I would have played 13 ♗f4!? The game Borisenko-Geller (18th USSR Championship, Moscow 1950) continued 13...♘fd7 (13...♘h5 14 ♗e3) 14 ♖ad1 ♘e5 15 b3 ♕b6! 16 ♗e3 a4! 17 f4 ♘ed7 18 ♖b1 axb3 with an acceptable game for Black, but it was stronger to play 14 ♘b3! ♘e5 15 ♘xc5 dxc5 16 ♖ad1 ♕f6 17 ♘a4 etc.

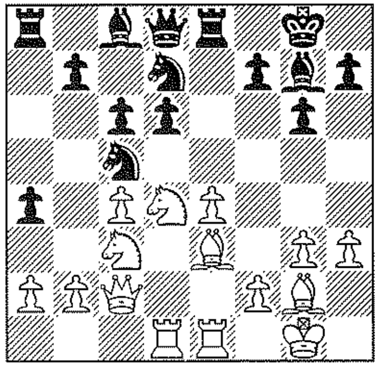
13...♘fd7

A theoretical novelty of the Zürich tournament. Previously 13...a4 was played – what Bronstein did not like here is evident from the notes to Game No. 94.

I don't know if there are sufficient reasons to move the knight from f6 immediately: it was, after all, pressing against the e4-pawn. However, the new manoeuvre unsettled Reshevsky.

14 ♖ad1 a4

Since that time this has become one of the main positions in the system with the bishop on g2.



15 ♘de2?!

An unfortunate retreat, which allows Black to deploy his forces harmoniously. In Zürich they also played both 15 f4 ♕a5 16 ♗f2 ♘b6 (Stahlberg-Boleslavsky, first round), and 15 g4?! ♕a5 16 ♗f1 ♘e6 (Euwe-Gligoric, seventh round) in each case with equality. And after 15 ♖e2 ♕a5 16 ♖ed2 (Averbakh), 16...♘e5! 17 b3 (17 ♗f1 a3 18 b3 ♘f3+!) 17...axb3 18 axb3 ♕b4 with equality was discovered 20 years later.

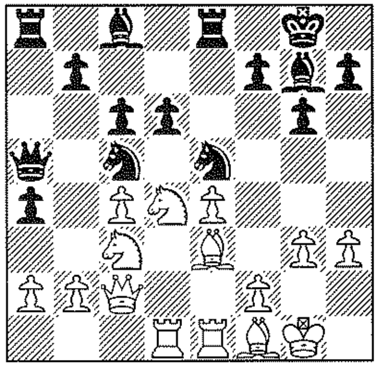
Perhaps White should consider 15 b4!? (exploiting the move ...♘fd7) 15...axb3 16 axb3 ♕a5 17 ♖b1 ♘a6 18 ♖a1 with the initiative: 18...♕c7 19 ♕d2 ♘dc5 20 ♖eb1! (A.Greenfeld-Hjartarson, Lucerne Olympiad 1982).

15...♕a5! 16 ♗f1

It turns out that it is unfavourable to play 16 ♖xd6?! ♘e5 17 ♖dd1 (but not 17 b3? axb3 18 axb3 ♗xh3! 19 ♗xh3 ♘f3+ 20 ♔f1 ♘xe1 21 ♔xe1 ♘xe4 22 ♖d3 ♕a1+ etc.) 17...♘xc4 18 ♗d4 ♕b4 with a good game for Black (Smyslov-Ciocaltea, Bucharest 1953).

16...♘e5 17 ♘d4

Effectively an admission of his mistake, although it is possible that Reshevsky did not attach any great significance to the toing and froing of his knight and was reckoning on regaining the tempo by driving away the enemy knight from e5 with f2-f4.



17...a3!

A very important move, securing 'eternal' squares for the black knights on b4 and c5. In addition, the pawn at a3 is an important trump in the endgame.

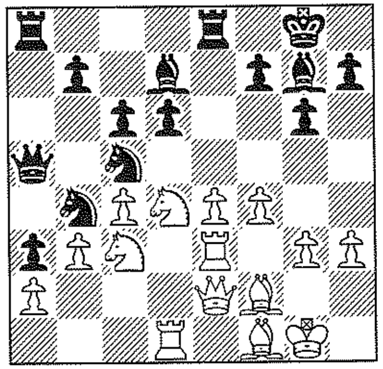
18 f4 (here Reshevsky offered a draw, but this was met with a tacit refusal) **18...♘ed7 19 b3 ♘a6! 20 ♗f2 ♘dc5 21 ♖e3 ♘b4**

The black knights have tightly nailed up the queenside!

22 ♕e2 ♗d7

A paradox: since the time of the Pachman-Bronstein game (*Game No.51*) seven years had already passed and Reshevsky could have thoroughly prepared for the King's Indian, but it only required Black to change his move order slightly (...♘fd7 instead of the usual ...♕a5) for White to end up in a far from impressive position.

Black's plan is simple – he intends the moves 23...♖e7 and ...♖ae8!, so White has to try and break through somewhere. And Reshevsky, after due thought, decides to do this immediately.



23 e5?! (it is clear that such activity is not undertaken willingly) **23...dxe5 24 fxe5 ♖ad8 25 g4 ♘e6 26 ♗h4 ♘xd4 27 ♖xd4 ♕c5!**

'The key move, on which Black's entire strategy in this phase of the game is based. It is very important not to allow the white knight to go to f6. 27...♗xe5? was not possible in view of 28 ♖xe5 and ♗xd8; now, however, White must give serious consideration to the defence of his e5-pawn.' (Bronstein)

28 ♖de4 (28 ♖d1 ♖xe5!) **28...♗h6! 29 ♔h1**

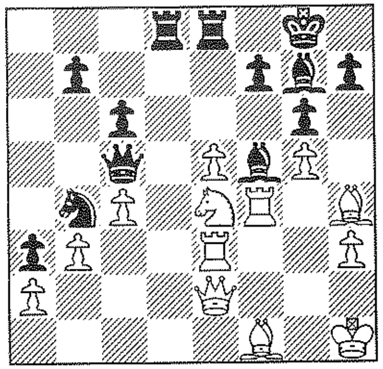
29 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 30 ♕f2 ♗xe3 31 ♖xe3 ♕d4 32 ♘e4 ♗e6 was unpromising for White. Reshevsky tries to sacrifice the exchange, but Bronstein, of course, does not take it.

29...♗e6 30 g5

According to Bronstein this is 'the start of a combination', but in general it is a desperate attempt to confuse matters, since both 30 ♗xd8?! ♖xd8 31 ♖g3? ♖d2 32 ♕e1 ♘xa2 and 30 ♗f6?! ♗xe3 31 ♖xe3 ♕d4! are bad for White.

30...♗g7 31 ♖f4 ♗f5! 32 ♘e4

Sacrificing the e5-pawn.



32...♗xe4+!

'After 32...♕xe5? White had prepared a devilish combination: 33 ♖xf5!!, when there can follow 33...♕xf5 34 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 35 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 36 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 37 gxf6+ or 33...gxf5 34 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 35 gxf6!! (White, who is already a rook down, does not take the queen, but takes the bishop with the pawn, creating an irresistible mating threat) 35...♕xe3 36 ♕g2+.' (Bronstein)

This is indeed pretty – Reshevsky was strong in creating such traps! But Bronstein cools his ardour with a simple exchange.

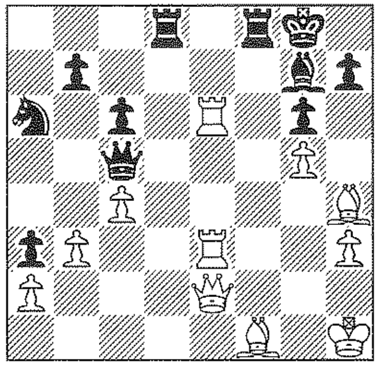
33 ♖fxe4 ♘a6!

A strong manoeuvre: the knight follows the route a6-c7-e6. 33...♖e6 34 ♗g3 is less clear.

34 e6 (getting rid of the weak pawn) **34...fxe6 35 ♖xe6**

Here Reshevsky again offered a draw, but... 'Black's position is better thanks to his strong a3-pawn, the exposed position of the white king, and the superiority of his knight over the inferior light-squared bishop.' (Bronstein)

35...♖f8!



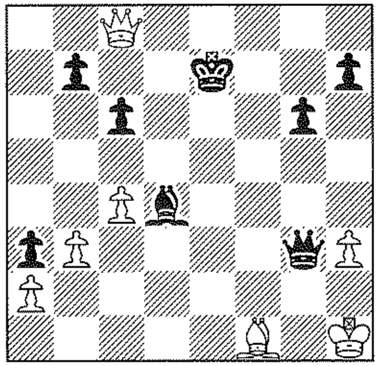
36 ♖e7

A difficult choice. After 36 ♖e8 ♖dxe8 37 ♖xe8 ♘b4 38 ♗f2 ♕f5 39 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 40 c5 h6 41 gxh6 ♔h7 White's position was also rather unpleasant, but perhaps that was how he should have tried to save the game.

36...♗d4 37 ♖3e6 ♕f5! 38 ♖e8 (in a worse version than two moves earlier; 38 ♗g2 ♘c5 and wins) **38...♘c5 39 ♖xd8 ♘xe6 40 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8! 41 ♗g3**

'At the adjournment Reshevsky thought for a long time and decided to give up his doomed pawn immediately in the hope of an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops.' (Bronstein)

41...♕xg5 (but not 41...♘xg5? 42 ♗d6+ ♔g7 43 ♕e7+ with perpetual check) **42 ♕xe6 ♕xg3 43 ♕c8+ ♔e7**



44 ♕g4

It transpires that 44 ♕xb7+? ♔d8 45 ♕a8+ ♔c7 46 ♕a5+ is not possible on account of 46...♗b6 with unavoidable mate. Now, however, Black converts his advantage in textbook fashion.

44...♕c3 (but not 44...♕f2? 45 ♕e2+!) **45 ♔g2 ♕b2+ 46 ♕e2+ ♔d6 47 ♔f3**

Alas, in the given situation the exchange of queens loses: 47 ♕xb2 axb2 48 ♗d3 ♔e5 49 ♔f3 ♗c5 50 ♗b1 ♔f6 51 ♔e4 h5 52 ♗c2 g5 53 ♗b1 ♗d6 54 ♗c2 g4 55 hxg4 hxg4 56 ♗b1 g3 57 ♔f3 ♗f4 and ...♔e5-d4-c3-d2-c1 (Euwe).

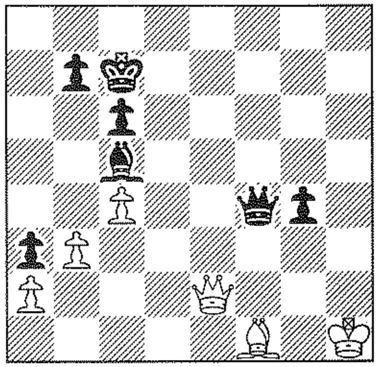
However, Black also cannot exchange queens: when his king picks up the a2-pawn, the white king goes to c2 and the result is a dead draw. Therefore he simply strengthens his position, always having the move ...♕b2 in reserve.

47...♗c5 48 ♔e4 ♕d4+ 49 ♔f3 ♕f6+ 50 ♔g2 ♔c7 51 ♕f3 ♕b2+ 52 ♕e2 ♕d4 53 ♔f3 h5

'The last reserves join the battle.' (Bronstein) There now begins a spectacular concluding attack on the king.

54 ♔g2 g5 55 ♔g3 ♕f4+ 56 ♔g2 g4! 57 hxg4 hxg4 58 ♔h1

'At this point it appeared, not only to the spectators, but also for an instant to the players, that Black would be unable to break his opponent's resourceful and stout resistance. The winning idea is based on zugzwang.' (Bronstein)



58...♔b6 (but not 58...g3? 59 ♗h3) **59 ♔g2**

♔c7 60 ♔h1 ♗d6

The computer impassively indicates a shorter way: 60...♕d4 61 ♕g2 ♗d6 and there is no defence against mate.

61 ♔g1 ♔b6 62 ♕g2 ♗c5+ 63 ♔h1 ♕h6+ 64 ♕h2 ♕e3 65 b4

If 65 ♕g2 Black wins by both 65...g3 66 b4 ♗d4, and 65...♕f4 66 ♕e2 ♗d6 67 ♔g1 ♕g3+ 68 ♕g2 ♕h4.

65...♗d4 (65...♗xb4 is also good) **0-1**

White lost on time, without in fact finding a move: after 66 c5+ ♔a7 67 ♕g2 g3! he is mated.

As we have seen, the King's Indian problems posed back in the 1940s by the 'Kiev School' proved to be not so simple and obvious. This was a genuinely new word, changing the representation of chess. Many subsequent generations of players grew up on these games...

One of the most brilliant tournaments in David Ionovich's career was the Interzonal in Gothenburg 1955: 1. Bronstein – 15 out of 20 (undefeated); 2. Keres – 13½; 3. Panno – 13; 4. Petrosian – 12½; 5-6. Geller and Szabo – 12; 7-9. Pilnik, Spassky and Filip – 11. Moreover, his win over his main rival – Keres – was judged to be the best game of the tournament. This was a genuine masterpiece of chess art!

Game 58

D.Bronstein-P.Keres

Interzonal Tournament,
Gothenburg 1955, 7th round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E41

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 (5 a3 – *Game No.28*) **5...b6?!**

A mixture of two different plans. Nowadays it is common knowledge that 5...♘c6 or 5...0-0 and ...d7-d5 is better. If Black wants to play ...b7-b6, he should do so on the fourth move (*Game No.72*).

6 ♘e2 ♗b7 (if instead 6...♘c6 7 0-0 cxd4 8 exd4 ♗xc3 9 ♘xc3! ♘xd4 10 ♗g5 White has excellent compensation for the pawn) **7 0-0**

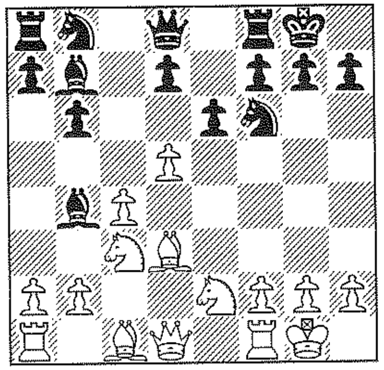
Rubinstein's dream: to achieve comfortable development while avoiding the doubling of the pawns after ...♗xc3, i.e. simply to kill the whole idea of the Nimzo-Indian Defence.

7...cxd4 (making way for the bishop to retreat from b4) **8 exd4 0-0**

Not 8...d5? because of 9 ♕a4+ ♘c6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♗b5 ♕d6 12 ♗f4!, while if 8...♗e7 or 8...♘c6 then, as in the game, 9 d5! is strong.

9 d5!

This is even more forceful than 9 a3 with the idea of 9...♗e7 10 d5 or 9...♗xc3 10 ♘xc3 d5 11 ♗g5. Already here Keres – an expert on the openings! – began thinking for a very long time.



9...h6!?

A rather strange move (prophylaxis on the ninth move, and by Black), but an interesting one, creating a threat to the d5-pawn. 9...exd5?! 10 cxd5 ♘xd5 11 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 13 ♕xd5 was unfavourable for Black, while 9...♘a6 was rather tedious in view of 10 ♗g5 or, according to Taimanov, 10 a3.

10 ♗c2

Creatively played! A much more pragmatic approach was 10 a3! ♗xc3 (10...♗e7 11 ♘f4!) 11 ♘xc3 exd5 12 cxd5 ♖e8 (but not 12...♘xd5? 13 ♕f3) 13 ♗c2 with the advantage of the two bishops and a protected central pawn.

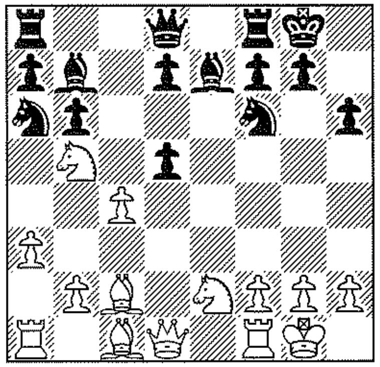
10...♘a6?!

Development 'on general grounds'. It would interesting to know how David Ionovich would have answered my reply 10...♕c7! with highly concrete play: 11 ♕d3 ♖c8 12 b3?! exd5 etc.

11 ♘b5!?

11 a3 would again have given an advantage, but White has something quite different in mind. For the moment he is threatening to win the bishop after 12 a3 (12...♗e7? 13 d6).

11...exd5 (Black is forced to expose the f5-square) **12 a3!** (12 ♘g3 ♖e8! 13 a3 ♗f8 is inaccurate) **12...♗e7**



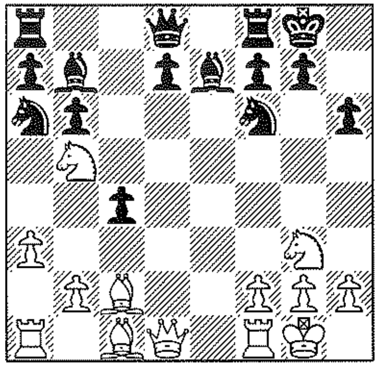
13 ♘g3!

Typical Bronstein: intuitively sensing that White may gain a dangerous attack on the kingside, he does not begrudge giving up material. On my scale of values a knight at f5 with the king at g8 usually gives compensation for a pawn, but here Black has also weakened his position with ...h7-h6 and both white bishops are trained on the kingside.

13...dxc4?

Keres doesn't see why he shouldn't take the second pawn. 'After 13...♖e8 14 ♕f3 ♘c5 *(no better is 14...♕c8 15 ♘f5 ♕xc4 16 ♘bd4! ♘e4 17 ♕g4 ♗f6 18 ♗xh6 g6 19 ♗e3 – G.K.)* 15 ♘f5 ♗f8 16 ♕g3 White would have developed a very strong attack, at the cost of just one pawn.' (Vainstein) Or 15...dxc4 16 ♕g3 ♘e6 17 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 18 ♘f5 ♗e4 19 ♘bd4 ♗xf5 20 ♘xf5 ♕c7 21 ♕h4 ♘g8 22 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 23 ♗d2 and the bishops dominate the knights.

However, in my opinion the immediate 13...♘c5! was more logical. Now 14 ♗xh6?! gxh6 15 ♕d2 is insufficient in view of 15...♘fe4 16 ♕xh6 ♗f6 or 15...♘ce4 16 ♕xh6 ♖e8, as is 14 ♘f5 dxc4 15 ♗xh6?! gxh6 16 ♕d2 (16 ♘xh6+ ♔h8 is no better) 16...♗e4 17 ♕xh6 ♗xf5 18 ♗xf5 ♘e6, so he should play 14 cxd5 ♗xd5 15 ♖e1 with enduring compensation for the pawn.



14 ♗xh6!!

An uncommonly bold and pretty sacrifice, purely intuitive, but more important – psychologically unexpected! Keres had probably considered only the obvious 14 ♘f5 and was intending to reply 14...♘c5 or even 14...♖e8 (since with 15 ♘bd6?! ♗xd6 16 ♘xd6 ♖e6 17 ♘xb7 ♕c7 White achieves nothing).

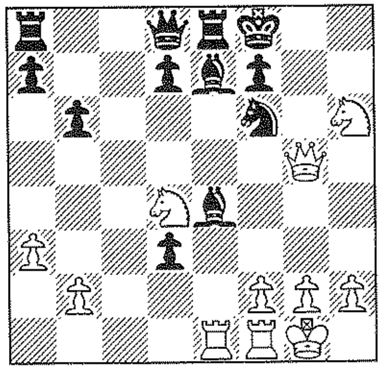
14...gxh6 15 ♕d2 ♘h7?

The general opinion is that this is the decisive mistake and that 15...♘c5! was essential.

Bronstein recalls that later many of the tournament participants spent a long time trying to demonstrate that the bishop sacrifice was incorrect; Geller was especially agitated, being convinced that any attack should be properly prepared. This situation is familiar to me: when I won an attractive game against Prybil with a piece sacrifice and the advance of my passed d-pawn in the European Team Championship (Skara 1980), my older colleagues observing the game – Karpov, Vaganian and others – also spent a long time seeking a refutation, some 'hole'. It is evident that brilliance by others provokes a certain inner dissatisfaction: why can't I do that?

But, as analysis shows, even after the best continuation 15...♘c5! 16 ♖ae1 ♘d3 Black would have had to avoid a number of dangerous pitfalls. Thus if 17 ♕xh6 it is bad to play 17...♖e8?, although not because of 18 ♖e5?? ♘xe5?? 19 ♘h5! ♘xh5 20 ♕h7+ ♔f8 21 ♕h8 mate (Bronstein indicates 18...♘g4!, winning), but in view of 18 ♗xd3! cxd3 19 ♘f5 and wins. In my opinion, the only defence is 17...♘e8! 18 ♖e5 f5 19 ♕g6+ ♘g7 20 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 21 ♖xf5 ♕e8 22 ♕g4 d5 with an unclear game.

Instead of 17 ♕xh6 it is stronger for White to play 17 ♗xd3! cxd3 18 ♘f5! (if 18 ♕xh6 I would have played not 18...♖e8? 19 ♘f5 ♗f8 20 ♕g5+ ♔h7 21 ♘bd6 ♖e6 22 ♖e3! and not 18...♘h7? 19 ♘f5 ♗f6 20 ♖e3 ♖e8 21 ♖g3+ ♔h8 22 ♖g7, but again 18...♘e8! – 19 ♖e5 f5 20 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 21 ♖xf5 ♘g7 and Black holds on) 18...♗e4 (if 18...♖e8? Bronstein gives 19 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 20 ♕g5 ♗c5 21 ♘f5 ♖e6 22 ♕g7+ ♔e8 23 ♕h8+ ♗f8 24 ♘bd6 mate – the craving for the beautiful is inexhaustible!) 19 ♘bd4 ♖e8 20 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 21 ♕g5.



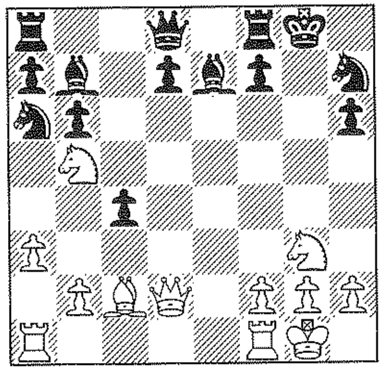
Analysis diagram

The saving path, if it exists at all, is thorny and lies through a mass of wild complications:

1) 21...♗g6 22 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 23 ♕xf6 ♖e4 24 ♕h8+ ♔e7 25 ♘hf5+ ♗xf5 26 ♘xf5+ ♔e6 27 ♕h3 ♕h8 28 ♘g7+ ♔e7 29 ♕xd3 (Bronstein). It seems to me that after 29...♖e5 30 ♘f5+ ♔f8 (30...♔f6 31 ♘d6!) 31 ♕d6+ ♔e8 (31...♔g8 32 ♘h6+) 32 f4 ♖e6 33 ♕d5 ♖b8 (33...♖d8?! 34 ♘d6+ ♔e7 35 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 36 f5 and wins) 34 ♘d6+ ♔e7 35 ♘xf7 ♕f6 36 ♘e5 ♖d6 37 ♕e4 White retains a serious initiative and winning chances;

2) 21...♗c5! 22 ♖xe4! ♖xe4 23 ♘df5 ♔e8 24 ♕g7 ♕c7 25 b4 ♗e7 26 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 27 ♘xe7 (Burgess) 27...♕f4! with hopes of a defence, or 25 ♕xf6 d5 26 b4 (26 ♕h8+ ♗f8 27 ♘g8 ♔d7 28 ♘f6+ ♔e6 29 ♘xe4 dxe4 30 ♘d4+ ♔d5 is unclear) 26...♗f8 27 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 28 ♕c6+ ♕d7 29 ♕xa8+ ♔f7 30 ♘e3 d2 31 ♕b8 (it is incorrect to play 31 ♕xd5+? ♕xd5 32 ♘xd5 ♖e1 33 ♘e3 a5 34 bxa5 bxa5 35 a4 ♗c5 36 ♘d1 ♔f6 and ...♔e5-d4-d3-e2) 31...♗h6! and Black is saved by the d2-pawn: 32 ♕h8 ♕e6 33 ♕h7+ ♔e8 34 ♕xa7 ♗xe3 35 fxe3 ♖xe3 36 ♕a4+ ♔e7 with a draw, or 32 ♕g3 ♕e6 with the threat of ...♗xe3, forcing White to give perpetual check.

Of course, I do not claim this to be an exhaustive analysis of this complicated position and I do not rule out the possibility that White's play can be improved somewhere, but it is probable that Black has sufficient defensive resources. It is another matter whether anyone would be capable of finding them at the board...



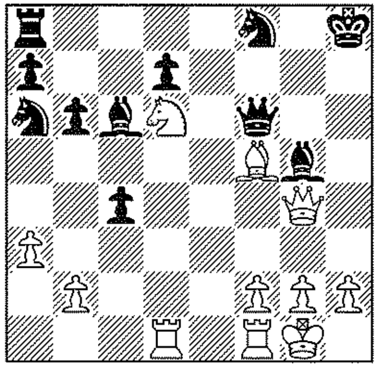
16 ♕xh6 f5 17 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 (alas, 17...♖f7? is not possible because of 18 ♕g6+ ♔f8 19 ♘bd6 ♗xd6 20 ♕xd6+ ♔g8 21 ♘h6+) **18 ♗xf5**

White has practically restored material equality, completely eliminated the enemy king's pawn defences and retained a terrible attack, which will become even more evident after the rook at a1 comes into play.

18...♘f8

The seemingly natural reply 18...♘f6 will not do in view of 19 ♕g6+ followed by the inclusion of the rook: 19...♔f8 20 ♖ae1! ♗d5 21 ♖e5 ♗f7 22 ♕h6+ ♔g8 23 ♖e3 or 19...♔h8 20 ♖ae1! ♗f8 21 ♖e3 ♗g7 22 ♕f7.

19 ♖ad1 ♗g5 20 ♕h5 ♕f6 (or 20...d5 21 ♘d6! ♕xd6 22 ♕xg5+ ♔f7 23 ♕h5+ ♔g7 24 ♖d4 and wins) **21 ♘d6 ♗c6 22 ♕g4 ♔h8**



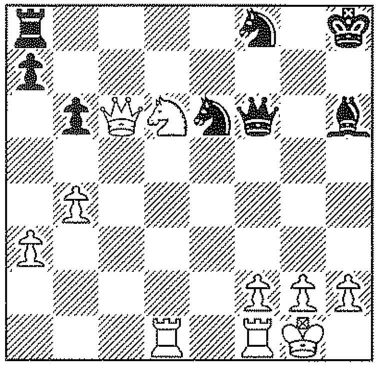
23 ♗e4!

A highly spectacular key move with a double threat – 24 ♕xg5! or 24 ♗xc6 and ♘e4. Bronstein is in his element: as was also later the case with Tal, he handled such positions with great inspiration and power. The immediate 23 ♕xg5?! ♕xg5 24 ♘f7+ ♔g7 25 ♘xg5 is inaccurate, since after 25...♔f6 the endgame is not so clear.

23...♗h6

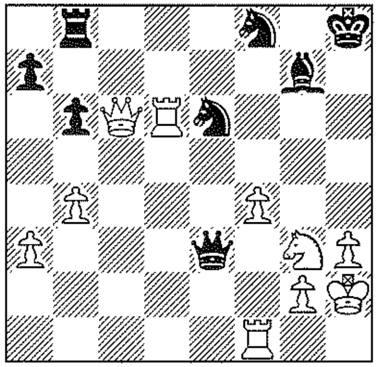
Black does not have time to play 23...♘c5 (because of 24 ♗xc6 dxc6 25 ♕xg5!) and his position collapses. Possibly the best practical chance was 23...♗f4!? – here White would have had to choose between 24 ♗xc6 dxc6 25 ♘f5 ♕g5 26 ♕h3+ ♔g8 27 ♖fe1 and the pretty 24 ♖d5! ♗xd5 25 ♗xd5 ♘e6 26 ♕h5+ ♔g8 27 ♘e4 ♕xb2 28 ♗xa8, winning.

24 ♗xc6 dxc6 25 ♕xc4 ♘c5 26 b4 ♘ce6 27 ♕xc6



Reaping the harvest of pawns. Black's position is hopeless, but still to come are several amusing episodes that were not mentioned by the commentators.

27...♖b8 28 ♘e4 ♕g6 29 ♖d6 ♗g7 30 f4 ♕g4 31 h3 ♕e2 32 ♘g3 ♕e3+ 33 ♔h2

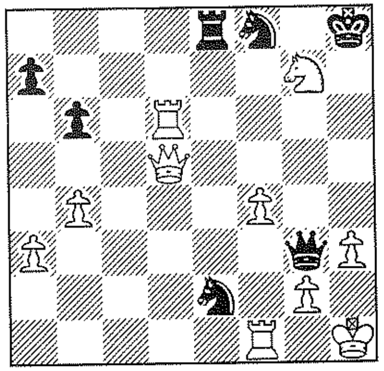


33...♘d4

After 33...♘xf4 they gave 34 ♖h6+ ♘h7 (34...♔g8 35 ♕c4+ ♘4e6 36 ♖xf8+) 35 ♕d6 ♗xh6? 36 ♘f5? (36 ♕xb8+ ♘f8 37 ♕xa7 is decisive) 36...♕e8?? (36...♕e4!) 37 ♕d4+ ♔g8 38 ♘xh6+, overlooking 35...♖f8!, when the win for White is not so obvious: 36 ♘h5 ♘g6 37 ♖xf8+ ♘gxf8 (but not 37...♗xf8? 38 ♕f6+) 38 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 39 ♖h4 etc.

In my opinion, 35 ♖h4! ♘e2 36 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 37 ♕c2+ is better, but 34 ♕c7! is simpler – 34...♖e8 35 ♕xg7+! ♔xg7 36 ♘f5+ and ♘xe3 (this variation was pointed out by Bronstein himself).

34 ♕d5 ♖e8 35 ♘h5 (35 ♕h5+! ♔g8 36 ♖xd4! ♗xd4 37 ♘f5 is simpler) **35...♘e2 36 ♘xg7?!** (signs of time-trouble: 36 ♕g5! ♕e7 37 ♘f6 ♘h7 38 ♕h5 ♗xf6 39 ♖xf6 was immediately decisive) **36...♕g3+ 37 ♔h1**



37...♘xf4?

37...♔xg7 was nevertheless more tenacious – I think that it would have created at least some slight problems for White:

1) 38 f5 ♕e3 39 f6+ ♔h8 40 ♖d1 ♘g3+ 41 ♔h2 ♕f4 42 ♕f3 ♕xf3 43 gxf3 ♘f5 44 ♖d8 ♖e2+ 45 ♔g1 ♔g8 46 ♖1d7 and wins;

2) 38 ♕b7+ ♔g8 39 ♖d5! (a more clear-cut solution) 39...♘xf4 40 ♖f5 ♖e7 41 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 42 ♕b8+, or 39...♘e6 40 ♖e5 ♕d3 41 ♖e1 ♘2xf4 42 ♕e4 ♕xe4 43 ♖5xe4 ♔f7 44 ♖f1 and wins.

38 ♕f3 (38 ♘xe8 ♘xd5 39 ♖xf8+ ♔h7 40 ♖d7+ was also good) **38...♘e2 39 ♖h6+ 1-0**

Despite a few rough edges, this was a phenomenal, star game, illustrating the grand scale of Bronstein's thinking.

Similar sacrifices and play material down occurred regularly in his games. That is how Anderssen played, after him, at a higher level – Chigorin, then – Alekhine, who was the first to demonstrate that a material advantage was merely one of the forms of advantage, and began successfully to link together the three basic factors of chess playing: *material, time and quality of position.*

This chess triad was perceived in a new twist by Bronstein, who became an important connecting link between Alekhine and Tal. They all fearlessly encroached on 'the sacred' – on material! In general, over the course of a century and a half line of succession has formed among the champions and challengers: Anderssen – Chigorin – Alekhine – Bronstein – Tal – Stein – Kasparov – Shirov...

One noteworthy fact: whereas in the Pachman-Bronstein game (*Game No.51*) one sees how Black's innovatory idea follows on from Steinitzian theory, on this occasion Bronstein appeared as a fervent follower of his creative antipodes! It is evident that the rapid development of chess in the 20th century led to an unusual convergence of Steinitz's and Chigorin's ideas.

Here is another example of a bold sacrifice of material not so much for the sake of a direct attack, as for positional gains, the importance of which could have been appreciated by few masters at that time.

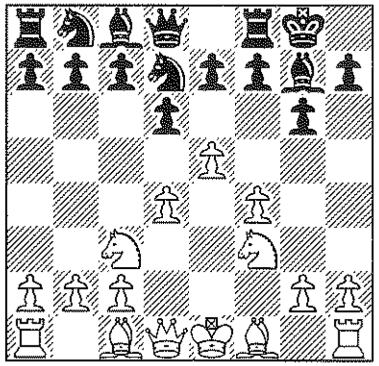
Game 59
D.Bronstein-F.Palmiotti
Munich Olympiad 1958
Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence B09

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 f4 ♗g7 5 ♘f3

The Three Pawns Variation was Bronstein's main weapon in this opening. Sometimes he also played 5 e5 dxe5 (5...♘fd7 6 ♘f3) 6 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 7 ♔xd1.

5...0-0 (the alternative is 5...c5) **6 e5** (in the 1970s 6 ♗d3 ♘c6 7 e5 dxe5 8 dxe5 ♘d5 9 ♗d2 occurred in David Ionovich's games) **6...♘fd7**

After 6...dxe5!? 7 dxe5 (7 fxe5 ♘d5 8 ♗c4 ♗e6 with equality) 7...♕xd1+ 8 ♔xd1 White has only slightly the better endgame (Bronstein-Vasyukov, 33rd USSR Championship, Tallinn 1965).



7 h4!?

A sharp novelty! Earlier only 7 ♗c4 had been played, and later both 7 e6 and 7 ♘g5. 'Black's threat of breaking up the white centre by ...c7-c5 looks very imposing, but I have never been afraid of ghosts, and, after specifically weighing up the variations, I came (of course, at the board) to an unexpected conclusion: is White's centre really so necessary?! Especially after the weight of the struggle has been switched to the h-file! Incidentally, in the given position it is not White's centre that crumbles, but his central pawns.' (Bronstein)

7...c5 8 h5 cxd4 9 ♕xd4

The aggressive 9 hxg6?! dxc3 10 gxf7+ ♖xf7 11 ♘g5?! (11 ♗c4; 11 e6) is parried by 11...cxb2! 12 ♗xb2 (12 ♗c4 ♘xe5! 13 ♕h5 ♕a5+) 12...♕a5+ 13 c3 ♘xe5! (Bronstein-Conquest, Reykjavik 1996).

9...dxe5 10 ♕f2 (10 fxe5? ♘xe5! 11 ♕h4 ♘xf3+ 12 gxf3 ♗f5 13 hxg6 ♗xg6 is weak) **10...exf4?**

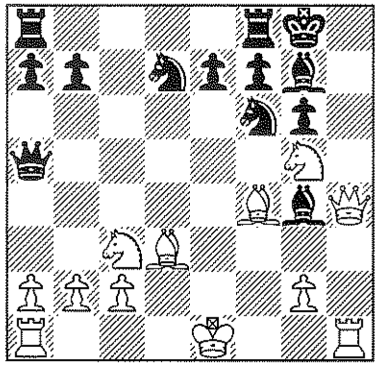
Black solves his opening problems more simply by 10...e4! 11 ♘g5 (11 ♘xe4 ♘f6! 12 ♘xf6+ exf6 13 hxg6 ♖e8+ 14 ♗e3 fxg6) 11...♘f6 12 hxg6 hxg6, and if 13 ♕h4, then 13...♕d4 14 ♘b5 ♕b6 15 ♗c4 ♗g4 with equality (Padevsky-Matanovic, Havana Olympiad 1966).

11 hxg6 hxg6 12 ♗xf4 ♘f6 13 ♕h4

'A certain chance factor in White's success was the availability to his queen of the favourable manoeuvre ♕d4-f2-h4. But chance factors of this type are present in any position, and the skill of a player consists in finding and exploiting such features.' (Bronstein)

13...♕a5!? 14 ♘g5! (not allowing the black queen to go to h5) **15...♗g4! 15 ♗d3 ♘bd7**

It would appear that White's attack has come to a standstill and that he is simply a pawn down...



16 0-0!?

'White had altogether no intention of giving an immediate mate on the h-file. It was important for him to open the file, in order to have the opportunity of using this threat. As for queenside castling, it is not obligatory: the king will even feel more secure in the right-hand corner. For his attack the powerful tandem ♕h4 and ♘g5 is more than sufficient. There was nothing for the rook to do at h1, whereas after 16 0-0 it will open fire on the f-file.' (Bronstein)

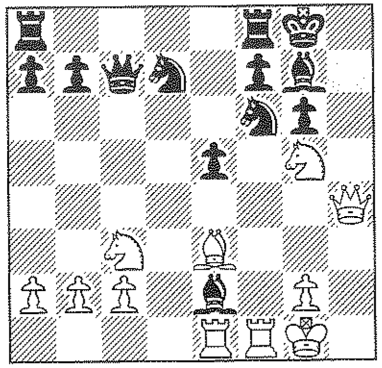
16...♗h5 17 ♖ae1?! e5?

A fatal weakening. White's task would have been immeasurably more difficult after 17...♘g4 or 17...♕b6+ and ...♕xb2. His general conception is original, of course, but if it had not been Palmiotti playing Black...

18 ♗d2 ♕c5+ 19 ♗e3 ♕c6 20 ♗b5 (20 ♘ce4!? with the idea of ♘g3) **20...♕c7 21 ♗e2!**

'A blow at the opponent's most vulnerable point. With the fall of the bastion at h5 Black's entire army will be demoralised.' (Bronstein)

21...♗xe2?



22 ♖xe2?!

The impassive computer instantly finds the decisive interposition 22 ♘d5! – 22...♕d8 23 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 24 ♖xe2 ♖e8 25 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 26 ♖f2, winning.

22...♖fc8 23 ♘ce4 (however, as it is White's entire army joins the attack on the king) **23...♔f8 24 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 25 ♖xf6! ♗xf6 26 ♘h7+ ♔e7 27 ♕xf6+ ♔e8 28 ♖d2** (or 28 ♗d4) **28...a5 29 ♕g7 1-0**

Unfortunately, after his triumph in the 1955 Interzonal, a fighting share of 3rd-7th places in the 1956 Candidates tournament and a successful performance in the Zonal at the 25th USSR Championship (1958), there began a spell of bad luck and vexing failures in Bronstein's career. The cause of this was largely the Botvinnik-initiated limit on the representatives from one country (i.e. the USSR) in the Candidates tournaments: not more than five out of eight were allowed.

Thus, in the Interzonal tournament in Portoroz 1958 *there were six qualifiers, but the four Soviet grandmasters were fighting for only three places* (since Smyslov and Keres were already in the list of Candidates), and willingly or not they were forced to play keeping an eye on one another. A very jittery state of affairs! One round before the finish a place in the top six had been secured by Tal, Petrosian and Gligoric, and behind them were Benko (12 out of 19), Bronstein and Fischer (11½), Averbakh and Olafsson (11). In the last round Benko and Fischer played a draw, Olafsson saved a difficult position and even won after the adjournment, while Bronstein, on hearing some applause and thinking that Averbakh had won, decided that he needed without fail to defeat an outsider – the Filipino master Cardoso, overstepped the mark and suffered a tragic defeat (the first in three Interzonal tournaments!). As a result, both he and Averbakh missed out by half a step...

He was to suffer an even crueller stroke of fate at the Interzonal in Amsterdam 1964, where *five Soviet grandmasters were fighting for the same three places.* After successfully passing through a doubly difficult qualifying process before this (in the 31st USSR Championship and in a separate Zonal match-tournament), here too in the end Bronstein occupied the sixth 'qualifying' place with the excellent result +10 -1 =12, but the Candidates became Smyslov, Tal and Spassky, who had gained a point more. Another to suffer was the three-times USSR Champion Leonid Stein (1934-1973) who took fifth place, and who fell victim to the 'Botvinnik rule' for the second successive time: in the 1962 Interzonal he finished sixth, but ahead of him were Geller, Petrosian and Korchnoi.

It was effectively on account of this unjust restriction that two such splendid players as Bronstein and Stein missed out on the battle for the world championship. Their replacements in the Candidates events were not of equivalent strength and it is clear that, with their participation, things at the top of chess could have turned out differently.

Alas, few now remember these human dramas. But meanwhile they reflected the unnatural situation that existed in chess in the 1950s and 1960s, when many of the best grandmasters, occupying most of the places in the world's top thirty, had no opportunity to participate fully in the world championship qualifying cycle – for the only reason that they were Soviets! Perhaps the only players who could compete with them were Reshevsky, Najdorf, Szabo, Stahlberg and Gligoric, and later Fischer, Larsen and Portisch. For the most part the others were lesser players who would have been unlikely ever to qualify for the Interzonal from a tournament of the level of the USSR Championship. Had there been no restrictions, the Candidates events would have become almost exclusively Soviet (as, say, Grand Slam tennis tournaments were once almost exclusively American).

Some will retort: but with this limit, fighting spirit was strengthened and only the very best made it to the top – that is, by the laws of Darwinism, the strongest survived! But just think how much nervous energy it cost these world-class stars to battle among themselves for the right to squeeze through the eye of a needle. And how it must have been to recognise that you are stronger and have occupied a higher place, but it is another player who will go through... Were not these unhealed spiritual wounds one of the causes of the untimely death of Leonid Stein?

As with Steinitz against Bardeleben (*Volume 1, Game No.33*), Bronstein also has his 'parting super-game,' played in his last Interzonal tournament (Petropolis 1973) – with the 23-year-old 'Yugoslav Tal', grandmaster Ljubomir Ljubojevic. In contrast to that ancient duel, the combination in it was far more complicated, irrational and, if you lay your hand on... the computer keyboard, incorrect. But the main thing is that this is genuine 'Improvisation in Chess', the theme of a book devoted to Bronstein's play.

Botvinnik told me how once, back in the late 1960s, he was asked to take a look at a talented youth 'Ljubo' Ljubojevic. They met, and the latter began showing him something. 'Do you analyse your games?' Botvinnik asked severely. 'What for?' Ljubo answered in genuine surprise. 'Here I realised that nothing worthwhile would come of him,' recalled Mikhail Moiseevich. Even so, even so... In the 1973 Interzonal Ljubojevic started with 6 out of 7 and after ten rounds was in first place; it appeared that no one could deny him one of the three qualifying places in the Candidates. But the following game put an end to his cherished dream, and not only in this tournament: strangely enough, he never again shone in the Interzonals, although he continued to play sharply, freshly and interestingly, and he gained a number of striking victories in super-tournaments.

Game 60
D.Bronstein-L.Ljubojevic
Interzonal Tournament,
Petropolis 1973, 11th round
Alekhine Defence B03

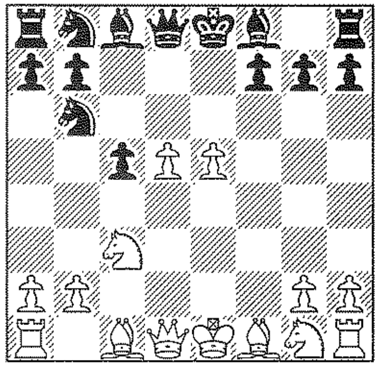
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4

Although 4 ♘f3 is more solid and promises White a somewhat better position, Bronstein plays in a more expansive manner, especially since he had analysed the Four Pawns Attack when he was just 15 years old!

5...dxe5 6 fxe5 c5?!

The main line is 6...♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6. But Ljubojevic had taken a fancy to an audacious plan with the immediate undermining of the centre, which had already occurred in his games, and he was hoping to outwit his opponent in the resulting complications.

7 d5 e6 (7...g6!?) **8 ♘c3 exd5 9 cxd5**

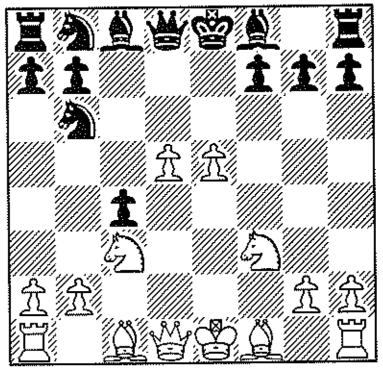


9...c4!

The point of the variation. White has the advantage after 9...♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕d4 11 ♗b5+! ♗d7 12 ♕e2 ♘xd5 (or 12...a6 13 e6!) 13 e6! fxe6 14 ♕xe6+ ♘e7 15 ♘f3 ♕f6 16 ♕e2 (Balashov-K.Grigorian, Riga 1967; Ljubojevic-Mozes, Dresden 1969).

10 ♘f3

The best move. A feeble alternative is 10 ♕d4 (10 ♗e3 ♗b4!; 10 a3!? ♗c5) 10...♘c6 11 ♕e4 ♘b4 12 a3 (12 d6?! g6!; 12 ♗e3!? g6 13 0-0-0 ♗f5 14 ♕f3) 12...♘4xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xc4 ♘c7 with equality (Ciocaltea-Ljubojevic, Malaga 1971).



10...♗g4?

A poor reply, but that was not yet known. It was only almost 20 years later that there appeared 10...♗b4 11 ♗xc4 ♗xc3+! 12 bxc3 ♘xc4 13 ♕a4+ ♘d7 14 ♕xc4 ♘b6 15 ♕b5+ ♕d7! with quite good chances of equalising after 16 ♕xd7+ ♗xd7 17 d6 ♖c8.

11 ♕d4?!

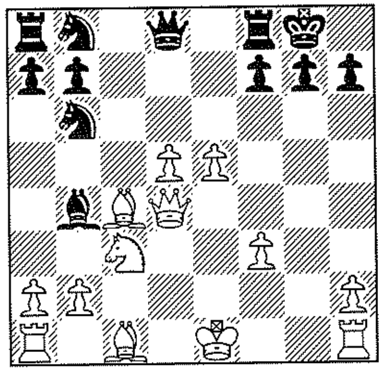
Previously an exclamation mark was attached to this move. And indeed, 11 ♗xc4?! ♘xc4 12 ♕a4+ ♘d7 13 ♕xc4 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♘xe5 is inferior. But in the late 1980s it transpired that the simple 11 ♗e2! gives White a big opening advantage, for example:

1) 11...♗c5 12 ♘g5! ♗f5 (a recommendation of Bagirov) 13 ♖f1! ♗g6 14 h4 h6 15 h5 ♗d3 16 ♗xd3 cxd3 17 ♖xf7! hxg5 18 ♖xg7 ♘xd5 19 ♕f3 ♘e7 20 ♕f7+ ♔d7 21 ♕d5+ ♔e8 22 ♕xc5 and wins;

2) 11...♗b4 12 ♕d4! (if 12 0-0, then 12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xc4 ♗e6! 16 ♘g5 ♘c6, but not 12...0-0? 13 ♘g5! ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 h6 15 e6! hxg5 16 exf7+ ♖xf7 17 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 18 ♕e6+ ♔f8 19 ♗xg5 and wins) 12...♗xf3 (12...♘xd5? 13 ♕xg4 ♘xc3 14 ♗d2 ♘xe2 15 ♗xb4 and wins) 13 ♗xf3 and it is hard for Black to breathe.

11...♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♗b4 (with the threat of ...♕xd5) **13 ♗xc4 0-0**

13...♘c6? 14 ♕e4 ♗xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♘xc4 does not work because of 16 dxc6 b5 17 c7 ♕c8 18 ♕c6+. But now 14...♘c6 is threatened. Black's chances are associated with the weakness of the white pawns and the open position of the white king.



14 ♖g1

A very entertaining alternative is 14 ♗h6!? (a 1982 novelty), after which Hort recommended 14...♘xc4 15 ♕g4 g6 16 ♕xc4 ♗xc3+ 17 bxc3 ♖e8 18 ♕d4 ♕f6 'with an unclear game' (I would add 19 0-0-0 ♖xe5 20 f4 ♖f5 21 ♖he1 ♘d7 22 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 23 ♖e5 etc.), but in my opinion, also possible is 14...gxh6 15 e6 ♗e7! (but not the 'theoretical' 15...f6? 16 d6! ♘xc4 17 e7 ♕e8 18 ♖g1+ ♔h8 19 ♕g4 and wins) 16 ♖g1+ ♗g5 17 f4 ♘c6 18 ♕c5 ♕f6 19 fxg5 ♕e5+. A very sharp position!

14...g6!

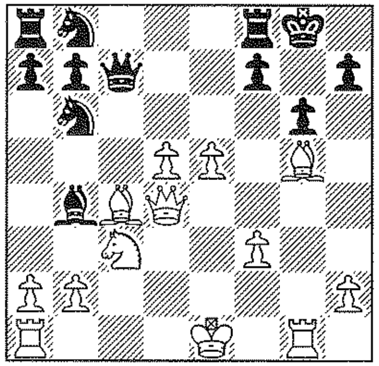
An important improvement. The game Ljubojevic-Honfi (Cacak 1970) went 14...♕c7? 15 e6! f6 (if 15...fxe6, then 16 ♗h6 e5 17 ♗xg7 exd4 18 ♗xd4+ ♔f7 19 ♖g7+) 16 ♗h6 ♕xc4 17 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 18 ♖g8+! ♔xg8 19 ♕g1+ with a spectacular rout.

15 ♗g5!

A novelty in reply! A correspondence game between two little-known English players from the previous year went 15 ♗h6?! ♘c6 16 ♕e4 ♘xe5! with advantage to Black.

15...♕c7!

Also the correct move (threatening both ...♕xc4, and ...♗c5). Grandmaster Vasyukov writes: Here the queen comes under attack by the d-pawn. 15...♕c8 is better.' But then the seemingly awkward 16 ♖g4! is strong.



16 ♗b3!

Now in the event of 16 ♖g4?! White would have simply lost a pawn – 16...♘xc4 17 ♕xc4 ♕xe5+ (this is the difference compared with 15...♕c8?!). Thus when he played 14 ♖g1, White had already planned a rook sacrifice, the pattern of which resembles the 'immortal' game Anderssen-Kieseritzky (*Volume 1, Game No.3*).

16...♗c5 17 ♕f4 ♗xg1

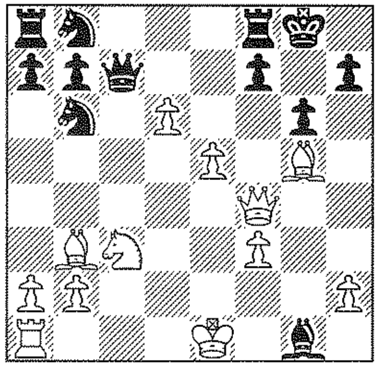
Under the influence of the result of the game, the commentators suggested other moves. 'An extra rook is, of course, a major acquisition, but possibly better was 17...♘8d7 18 d6 ♕c6 19 0-0-0 ♗xg1 20 ♖xg1 ♕c5 21 ♖e1 ♖ae8.' (Vasyukov) This is really not so: after 22 e6! fxe6 23 ♖xe6! ♖c8 24 ♖e5+ it is time for Black to resign.

Another 'improvement' – 17...♖e8 – is parried by Vasyukov with 18 d6 ♗xd6 19 ♘b5, but this is bad because of 19...♖xe5+ 20 ♕xe5 ♗b4+. Since 18 ♗f6 ♘8d7 19 ♘e4 ♖xe5 20 d6 ♗xd6 21 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 22 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♕h6+ ♗g7 24 ♕xh7 ♘f6 25 ♘xf6 ♕xf7 26 ♕xg6 ♕xf6 is unclear, only with 18 ♘e4! ♕xe5 (18...♖xe5?! 19 ♔f1) 19 0-0-0 ♕xf4+ 20 ♗xf4 ♘8d7 21 ♖ge1 does White retain the initiative.

18 d6

Three months later, in Manila 1973, Gheorghiu tried 18 ♔e2? against Ljubojevic, but after 18...♕c5! 19 ♖xg1 ♕xg1 20 ♗f6 ♕g2+ 21 ♔e3 ♕xb2! 22 ♔d3 (22 ♕h6 ♕c1+) 22...♘8d7 23 ♘e4 ♖ac8 24 ♕h6 ♘xe5+ 25 ♔e3 ♖c3+ White resigned. Later both 18 0-0-0 ♘8d7 19 ♖xg1 ♕xe5 and 18 ♘e4 ♘6d7!? were tried.

Not long ago, at the 2002 Olympiad in Bled, Ljubojevic informed me that at this point Bronstein offered him a draw: he had only five minutes left on his clock, whereas Black... had only used ten minutes! And Ljubo, naturally, declined (which, it would seem, he regrets to this day).



18...♕c8?

A serious mistake, as is 18...♕c6? 19 e6 fxe6 20 ♗xe6+ ♔g7 21 ♗h6+. The correct line is 18...♕c5!, not fearing 19 ♘e4! in view of 19...♕d4! (Bronstein considered 19...♕e3+? 20 ♕xe3 ♗xe3 21 ♗xe3 ♘c6 22 f4 with an overwhelming position for the exchange, or 19...♕b4+? 20 ♔f1 ♗d4 21 e6!? with a powerful attack; I should like to add 21 ♘f6+ ♔h8

22 ♖e1! ♗c5 23 ♖e4 ♕b5+ 24 ♔g2 ♘8d7 25 ♕h4 and wins) 20 ♖d1 ♕xb2 21 ♘f6+ (21 e6?! ♘8d7! 22 e7 ♕xh2, Y.Grünfeld-Ljubojevic, Riga Interzonal 1979, is weaker) 21...♔h8 22 ♖d2 ♕a1+! In the game Y.Grünfeld-Wiemer, Tecklenburg 1984, after 23 ♔e2 (23 ♖d1 ♕b2 with a draw) 23...♘c6! 24 ♕h4 h5 White missed 25 ♘xh5! ♘d4+ 26 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 27 ♘f4+ ♔g8 28 ♗f6 ♕f2+ 29 ♕xf2 ♗xf2 30 ♘xg6! ♗g1(c5)! 31 ♘e7+ ♔h7 32 ♗c2+ ♔h6 33 ♘f5+ with perpetual.

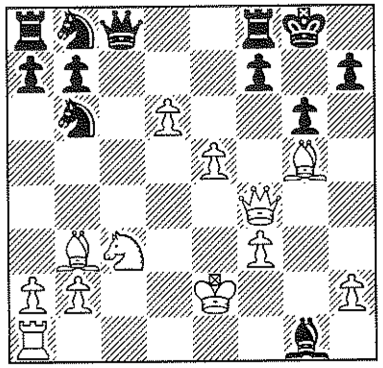
However, 23 ♗d1! is stronger, with the idea of 23...♘8d7? 24 ♕h4 ♕xe5+ 25 ♔f1 h5 26 ♘xh5! gxh5 27 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 28 ♖g2 and wins (Burgess). Here extreme measures are already necessary – 23...♗e3!! 24 ♕xe3 (after 24 ♕h4 ♗xd2+ 25 ♔xd2 h5 26 ♘xh5 ♘c4+! White is hampered by the weakness of his own king) 24...♘c4 25 ♘g4! (with the threat of 26 ♗f6+ and ♘h6 mate; if 25 ♕d4 ♕xd4 26 ♖xd4, then 26...♘xe5 with equality) 25...f6!? (a more passive alternative is 25...♘d7 26 ♕d4 ♕xd4 27 ♖xd4 ♖fc8 28 f4 ♔g7 with drawing chances) 26 ♕d4 (26 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6!) 26...♕xd4 27 ♗xf6+ (after 27 ♖xd4 apart from 27...♘xe5, 27...fxg5 28 ♖xc4 h5! and ...♘c6 is also possible) 27...♖xf6 28 ♖xd4 ♘xe5! 29 ♘xf6 ♘bc6 30 ♖d5 ♖f8 and Black should be able to neutralise the opponent's sole remaining trump – his passed d-pawn.

It would appear that after 18...♕c5! 19 ♘e4! ♕d4! 20 ♖d1 ♕xb2 White's attack nevertheless comes to a standstill and that Capablanca's old thesis is confirmed: the best way of refuting a gambit is to accept it!

19 ♔e2?

An error in reply, which is psychologically quite understandable: while 'developing' his rook at a1, White is aiming for ♘e4 followed by ♘f6+ or ♗f6 and ♕h6, and therefore he avoids the pin on his knight after 19 0-0-0.

But in fact the key role is played by the bishop at b3, and, as Bronstein showed, 19 0-0-0! that was correct, for example: 19...♗c5?! (19...♕c5 is more tenacious) 20 e6! fxe6 21 ♕e5! ♖e8 (21...♘d5 22 d7!) 22 ♗h6 (but not 22 d7? ♘8xd7 23 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6 24 ♕xe6+ ♔g7) 22...♕d7 23 ♘e4! ♘c6 24 ♘f6+, breaching Black's defences.



19...♗c5?

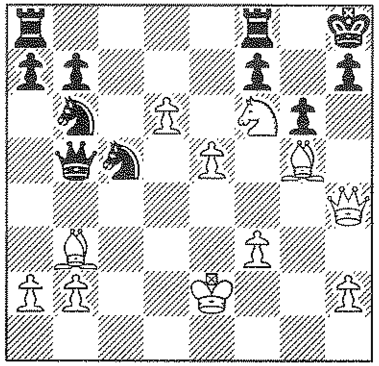
'Up to this move Black had played very quickly, at blitz speed, with the aim of creating a psychological superiority and also of forcing the opponent to spend much time, exclusively on his own clock, in calculating the complicated variations which Ljubojevic himself had already analysed beforehand. In the heat of the battle he had grown so used to the blitz rhythm that he instantly moved the bishop. And he rejected 19...♕c5! because of the 'winning' 20 ♘e4, missing that with the king on e2 there is the possibility of 20...♕b5+ *(and it is now Black who wins: 21 ♔d2 ♘c4+ 22 ♗xc4 ♕xb2+ 23 ♔d3 ♕d4+ 24 ♔e2 ♕xc4+ 25 ♔e1 ♖c8 or 21 ♔e1 ♘8d7 22 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 23 ♗xf6 ♖ae8 24 ♕h6 ♖xe5+ – G.K.)*. 20 e6 is more threatening, but with the unexpected manoeuvre 20...♘8d7! *(or 20...♕f2+ 21 ♔d3 ♘8d7! – G.K.)* 21 exf7+ ♔g7 22 ♗h6+ ♔h8! the king escapes from the checks.' (B.Vainstein).

So, if Ljubo had thought a little longer and played 19...♕c5!, he could have parried the attack and gained a clear advantage, and as a result retained the lead and finished in the top three qualifiers for the Candidates. Alas, history does not recognise the subjunctive mood. Apparently it was not destined to happen...

20 ♘e4 ♘8d7 21 ♖c1 ♕c6 22 ♖xc5!

The sacrifice of the second rook is on the theme of diversion. Despite terrible time-trouble, 'cunning Devik' conducts the finish to the game as in the years of his youth.

22...♘xc5 23 ♘f6+ ♔h8 24 ♕h4 (it transpires that there is no good defence against mate) **24...♕b5+**



25 ♔e3!

The start of a victorious march by the king into the opponent's position! Since the checks come to an end, Black is forced to return material.

25...h5 26 ♘xh5 ♕xb3+

After 26...♕d3+ 27 ♔f2 the win is straightforward: 27...♘e4+ 28 fxe4 ♕d4+ 29 ♔g2 ♕xb2+ 30 ♔h3 ♕c3+ 31 ♘g3+, or 27...gxh5 28 ♗f6+ ♔g8 29 ♕g5+, and 29...♕g6 is not possible because of 30 ♕xg6 mate (again the leading role is played by the bishop at b3!).

27 axb3 ♘d5+ 28 ♔d4! ♘e6+ 29 ♔xd5! ♘xg5 30 ♘f6+ ♔g7 31 ♕xg5 ♖fd8

Or 31...♖h8 32 h4. In a completely hopeless position, through inertia Ljubojevic does not resign, being in a state of shock at what had happened and setting his hopes on the time-trouble of his opponent, who had literally seconds left on his clock.

32 e6 (both 32 d7, and 32 ♘g4 ♖h8 33 ♕f6+ ♔g8 34 e6 also win) **32...fxe6+ 33 ♔xe6 ♖f8 34 d7 a5 35 ♘g4 ♖a6+ 36 ♔e5 ♖f5+ 37 ♕xf5 gxf5 38 d8♕ fxg4 39 ♕d7+ ♔h6 40 ♕xb7 ♖g6 41 f4 1-0**

The time control was reached and Black resigned.

It need hardly be said that this game caused a great stir and was judged not only the most brilliant in the tournament, but also the best in the 16th volume of the Yugoslav *Informator*. Of course, it is far from perfect and error-free, but it is seething with real life and Bronstein's unmistakable style is evident. For the sake of brilliance it is worth taking a risk! The game fully answers the highest predestination of the game – to afford pleasure to people (why else is chess played?).

That is how Bronstein played, even in his advanced years; for example – his fantastic win over Lputian (Ubeda 1996). His best games have remained in the memories of many generations – what other reward can a top player wish for? Also remaining are his splendid books: on the 1953 Candidates Tournament, *200 Open Games*, *The Modern Chess Self-Tutor* and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. After Tarrasch and Nimzowitsch he is perhaps the most outstanding populariser of the game, a genuine teacher of the chess world. And also an innovator, the author of many modern ideas – rapid chess, play with the addition of seconds for every move and with a change in the initial placing of the pieces. I think that if he had become world champion, the 'Fischer clock' and 'Fischer chess' would have been called the 'Bronstein clock' and 'Bronstein chess'.

In the 1990s he was again at the leading edge of chess thought, as he switched to playing against the strongest computer programs. With his original, non-standard chess thinking, it was, of course, easier for him to grasp how man should play against a machine, and Bronstein's experience, summarised in his latest book *David against Goliath*, is truly invaluable.

He always considered himself an artist, and not a scientist, like Botvinnik, and he did not separate chess into components. 'I think not in variations, but ideas!' – that was the formula of Bronstein, who since childhood dreamed of playing a match for the crown and who said before the 1948 Interzonal tournament: 'I see my objective as being not even to reach the final match and defeat all my opponents. I want to surpass the creative level of the present world champion.'

To the Brink and Beyond

It appeared that in the first match for the world crown under the auspices of FIDE, Botvinnik-Bronstein (Moscow, spring 1951), the very match-fit 27-year-old challenger had every chance of defeating the 40-year-old champion, who was out of training. True, Botvinnik's fame and prestige were so great, that even his opponent did not greatly believe in the possibility of his being defeated.

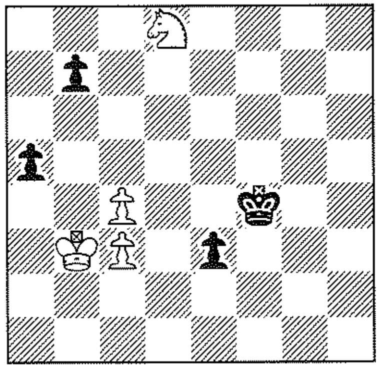
They had first played each other in the 1944 USSR Championship, when the young debutant managed to defeat the powerful favourite. 'During the resumption I had to work hard, and in the end I outwitted him,' recalls Bronstein. 'I made the winning move and went off to the buffet for a cup of tea. Returning a few minutes later, I could not find either Botvinnik, or my board! I could not understand what had happened... An arbiter came up and reassured me: "Don't worry, Botvinnik resigned and we have set up another game to be resumed here." ' Their second meeting, in the 1945 USSR Championship, finished in a draw, and in the end Botvinnik took first place, and Bronstein third.

And then finally came the big match, before which one of the players had been winning every competition for three years in a row, whereas the other... had not played at all. He could have got away with this in the times of Lasker and Capablanca, but not in the middle of the 20th century, when chess was beginning to develop at a furious pace. It was not surprising that Botvinnik experienced serious problems and that many things did not go his way: after all, he was facing not simply a very strong opponent, but the leader of a new wave, a highly resourceful, practical player, who was especially skilled in sharp, dynamic play.

At the start the champion played ponderously, he miscalculated, got into time-trouble and, after four tense draws, lost with White in the fifth game. It was especially unpleasant that on that day, according to his opponent, Botvinnik was particularly composed: 'As usual he shook hands without looking me in the eye, so as not to allow himself to relax, thought for a little and with a movement of his arm, full of some particular inner strength, he advanced his d-pawn, as if saying to it: today you must achieve success.'

After taking the lead, in the sixth game Bronstein played 1 e4 for the only time in the match. After 1...e5 he was planning 2 f4!? (cf. *Game No.53*), but Botvinnik replied 1...c5 and managed to equalise in a difficult variation of the Rauzer Attack (cf. *Game No.44*). In a dead-drawn endgame a miracle occurred, which the press quickly called 'the blunder of the century'.

Game 61
D.Bronstein-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1951, 6th game



57 ♔c2?? ♚g3 and White resigned. To general astonishment, he did not play 57 ♘e6+ and ♘d4 with a draw. Why? It is well-known that a match is a battle of nerves. Immediately after the time scramble (the second control was on the 56th move) Bronstein relaxed and began thinking his own thoughts. Later he related: 'Waking up 45 minutes later, I accidentally touched my king. I was forced to move it... After the reply I stopped the clocks with a smile, avoiding making any tragedy out of what had happened: I always knew how to resign and I regard this as an integral quality of a real chess player.'

Even so, this blow had a marked influence on the further course of the match. In the seventh game, after an exchange of time-trouble mistakes, Bronstein could have suddenly seized the initiative on the 32nd move by exchanging a pair of rooks, but instead of this he blundered into a knight endgame that was won for his opponent. 'In this game my nerves proved to be a little stronger,' Botvinnik wrote in his diary. When the game was resumed he accurately converted his pawn advantage and took the lead for the first time. But, like Capablanca in 1927, he was unable to build on his success. The next three games ended in draws, although in the ninth and tenth the champion had every chance of winning.

Before the 11th game, in a belligerent frame of mind, Botvinnik wrote in his diary: 'Malice and composure... Let's go! I need a good win!' Alas, as in a number of other battles for the crown, this game proved to be an unlucky one for the champion. From the notes it is evident how sharp the psychological struggle was in this match.

Game 62
M.Botvinnik-D.Bronstein
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1951, 11th game
Queen's Indian Defence E17

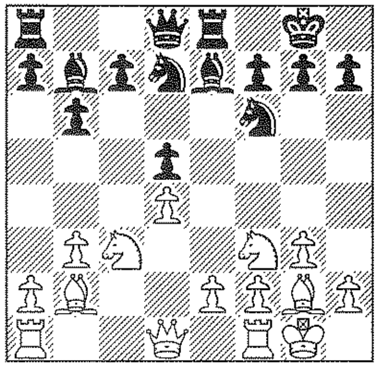
1 d4 e6

This move order was employed five times by the challenger and four times by the champion in this match! Bronstein copied his opponent's opening repertoire, playing both the French (2 e4 d5), and the Dutch Defence (2 c4 f5): 'I wanted to show that I feel unconstrained even in the world champion's favourite openings.' On this occasion it turned out differently.

2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 b6 4 g3 ♗b7

At that time Nimzowitsch's idea 4...♗a6!? was considered dubious because of 5 ♕a4 (Euwe-Alekhine, AVRO tournament, Holland 1938). But later Bronstein discovered 5...c6 6 ♘c3 b5!? 7 cxb5 cxb5 8 ♘xb5 ♕b6 9 e3 ♗b7! 10 ♗e2 ♗c6 and the dynamic move 4...♗a6 came to the forefront. And when White's play was improved by 9 ♘c3! ♗b4 10 ♗g2 0-0 11 0-0 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♗xe2 13 ♖e1, the main line became 5...c5! 6 ♗g2 ♗b7.

5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 b3 (an old plan, which was fashionable in the 1930s; for 7 ♘c3 ♘e4! cf. *Game No.23*) **7...d5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗b2 ♘bd7 10 ♘c3 ♖e8**



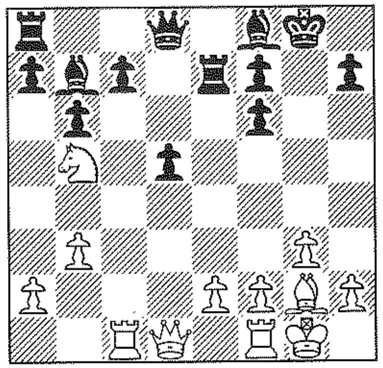
11 ♘e5!?

A novelty, prepared for the match. In Levenfish-Botvinnik (Moscow/Leningrad 1st matchgame 1937) Black seized the initiative after 11 ♖e1?! ♘e4!

11...♗f8 (11...♗d6?! 12 f4 ♘e4 13 ♘xe4 dxe4 14 ♕c2 favours White) **12 ♖c1**

The point of the preparation is this bold pawn sacrifice. If 12 f4 there would have followed 12...c5 13 e3 cxd4 14 exd4 ♘e4, and 15 ♕c2? is not possible because of the reply 15...♖c8.

12...♘xe5! (Black accepts the challenge) **13 dxe5 ♖xe5 14 ♘b5 ♖e7 15 ♗xf6 gxf6**



16 e4

'This move was made with a broad sweep of the hand, as if to say to the white pieces: I have done everything that I could, now it is up to you to conclude the attack! But this "Stanislavski-style" method of physical pressure did not have any effect on me,' writes Bronstein. 'I knew that now I myself was going to give him a surprise. Much later I read an account by the Englishman Alexander about his first game with Botvinnik. When Mikhail Moiseevich looked at him, adjusted his hair and his spectacles, made the move c2-c4 and picked up his pencil in order to record this signal for the start of battle, Alexander, an experienced player, had an irresistible desire to resign immediately, so significant did Botvinnik's actions seem to him. And indeed, he lost the game without putting up any resistance! In the same way neither Tal, nor Fischer, nor Karpov, nor Kasparov were beginners in the field of psychologically treating their opponents...'

Incidentally, other continuations are unpromising for White. Flohr recommended 16 ♘d4, giving 16...c5 17 ♘f5 ♖e5 18 f4 ♖xf5? 19 e4!, but 16...♕d7! is better. Lilienthal suggested 16 b4 followed by ♘d4 and b4-b5, but here 16...a5! is strong.

16...dxe4 17 ♕g4+ ♗g7!

'I was in no doubt that in his preparations Botvinnik had overlooked this move. After the "natural" 17...♔h8?! 18 ♖fd1 the black queen would have had no good move.' (Bronstein)

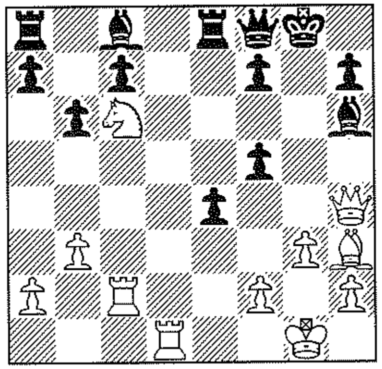
18 ♖fd1 ♕f8! (but not 18...♕c8? 19 ♕f4) **19 ♘d4?!**

'The start of some strange manoeuvres: Botvinnik had clearly lost his composure. 19 ♘c3 was simpler, when Black should open the a1-h8 diagonal: 19...f5! 20 ♕xf5 ♖e5.' (Bronstein) Flohr recommended 19 ♘xc7 ♖d8 20 ♘b5, but here too it is hard for White to find full compensation for the pawn.

19...♗c8 20 ♕h4 f5 21 ♘c6

According to Flohr, the continuation 21 ♗h3!? ♗xd4 22 ♖xd4 was better, and if 22...♗e6, then 23 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 (23...♕g7 24 ♖xa7!) 24 ♕g5+ ♕g7 25 ♖d8+ with perpetual check. However, 22...f6 is unclear, while Bronstein gives 22...h6!? 23 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 24 ♖d8 ♖c1+ 25 ♔g2 ♗a6 and the two rooks are stronger than the queen: 26 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 27 ♕xh6 ♖fc8 etc.

21...♖e8 22 ♗h3 ♗h6 23 ♖c2



23...e3! (signalling the start of the counter-attack) **24 fxe3 ♗xe3+ 25 ♔h1 ♗e6 26 ♗g2**

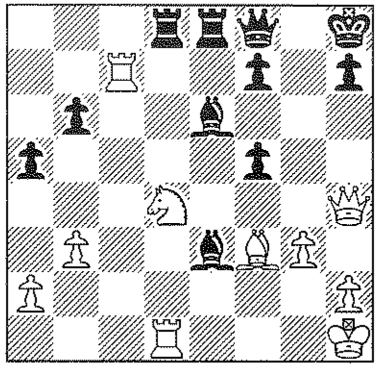
'The bishop sounds the retreat. Botvinnik no longer had the emotional strength to restrain the creative burst of the black pieces and... also the opponent.' (Bronstein)

26...a5 27 ♗f3 (27 ♗d5 ♗c5!) **27...♔h8 28 ♘d4**

'An abject, restless move. The white bishop has also returned to the long diagonal with nothing to show for its pains. If the term "knock-down" existed in chess, it would be highly appropriate for evaluating the state of the white pieces.' (Bronstein)

28...♖ad8 29 ♖xc7

At least regaining one of the pawns. 'After 29 ♕f6+ ♕g7 30 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 31 ♘xe6+ fxe6 the ending favours Black. If 29 ♘xe6, then 29...♖xd1+ 30 ♗xd1 ♖xe6, and 31 ♖xc7? is not possible because of the reply 31...♕a8+.' (Flohr)

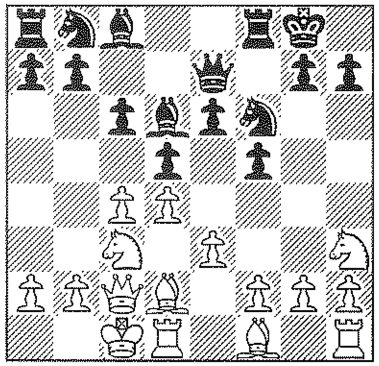


29...♗d5! 30 ♖e1?

'A blunder, logically stemming from Botvinnik's psychological state: he still wants to attack... The computer, which he tried so hard to construct, would not have made such a mistake, of course. During the game I saw the variation 30 ♖f1! ♕d6! 31 ♘xf5? ♗xf3+ 32 ♖xf3 ♕d1+ 33 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 34 ♔h3 ♖xh2+ 35 ♔xh2 ♕g1+ 36 ♔h3 ♕h1+ 37 ♔g4 ♖g8+ 38 ♔h5 ♖g5+ 39 ♔h6 ♖xg3+! 40 ♖xc3 ♖g6+ 41 ♔h5 ♕d1+ with a win for Black. The correct defence was pointed out by Flohr – 31 ♗xd5! ♕xd5+ 32 ♘f3, but this is an admission of failure: after either 32...♔g7 or 32...♖c8 White would have had to fight for a draw.' (Bronstein)

30...♕d6! 31 ♖c2 (31 ♖c3 f4!?) **31...♖e4! 32 ♗xe4 ♗xe4+ 33 ♕xe4 fxe4 34 ♘f5 ♕b4 35 ♖xe3 ♖d1+ 36 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 37 ♖xd2 ♕xd2+ 38 ♔h3 ♕f2 39 ♔g4 f6 0-1**

In the 12th game, the challenger, deciding to 'strike while the iron was hot', chose an excessively artificial plan against the Dutch Defence: **1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 e3** (3 ♘c3 ♗b4!? – 10th game; 3 g3 – *Game No.65*) **3...♘f6 4 ♘c3 d5 5 ♘h3 c6 6 ♗d2 ♗d6 7 ♕c2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♕e7**

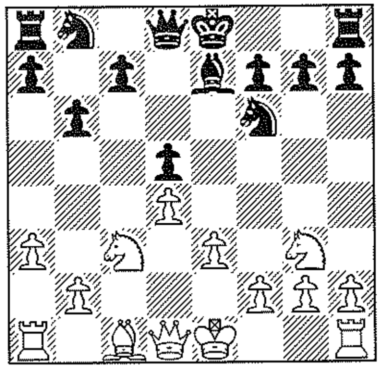


9 f3?! dxc4! 10 e4 fxe4 11 ♘xe4?! (it was better to play 11 fxe4 e5 12 ♗xc4+ ♔h8) **11...b5 12 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 13 f4? ♘a6 14 ♗e2 c5!** and Black converted his pawn advantage. The champion again took the lead: 6½-5½.

Later Bronstein grieved: 'After gaining such a pleasant win in the 11th game, I was simply obliged to play 1 e4 or 1 d4 e6 2 e4. Why did I avoid the French? Because the Dutch and French Defences were also my strong points in the match, I naively thought that I should conceal the correct method of attack from Botvinnik. However, this ultra-subtle opening strategy proved to be a mistake. It was in the 12th game, played at a turning point in the match, that I should have thrown caution to the winds.'

In the next four games Botvinnik held the initiative, but each time, due to some error, the result was a draw. He was especially vexed by the 16th game, where he withstood persistent pressure and, after a blunder by his opponent, gained a strategically won position on the resumption, but due to the effect of three severe time scrambles he threw away the win on the 72nd, time control move.

Botvinnik appeared to be tired. This was confirmed in the 17th game, where Bronstein employed an important novelty in the Nimzo-Indian Defence with Black: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♘e2 ♗a6!?** (an inferior alternative is 5...♗b7 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 0-0 8 ♗d3! c5?! 9 d5 – 13th game). This move became the main reply to the Rubinstein Variation (later Fischer played it, as we will describe in Volume 3). After **6 a3 ♗e7 7 ♘g3?!** (7 ♘f4! – *Game No.74*) **7...d5 8 cxd5 ♗xf1 9 ♘xf1 exd5 10 ♘g3**



10...♕d7! 11 ♕f3 ♘c6! 12 0-0 (12 ♘f5 ♗f8 13 ♘g3 ♗e7 with equality) **12...g6** Bronstein achieved a comfortable game, gradually seized the initiative and gained a deserved win.

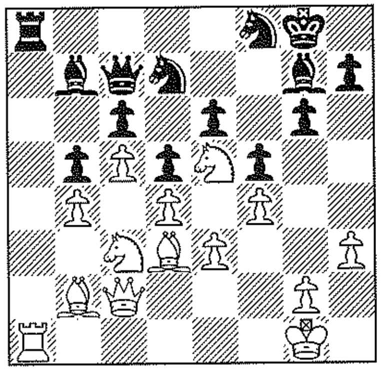
From the psychological point of view, his comment on 10...♕d7 is interesting: 'The start of a series of strong moves, which have the aim of confusing the opponent and upsetting his harmonious train of thought. White wanted to play his knight to f5 – Black prevents this. With 11 ♕f3 White renewed the threat, and Black does not object. Isn't this eccentric? Sheer tricks, with no logic at all. But take a look at the position: all the pieces are in play, and if 11...g6?, then 12 e4! Later Botvinnik said that my play was confusing and that often he could not even understand what I wanted. I consider these words to be the very best compliment. If the world champion does not understand your plan, what more could you want?'

After levelling the scores, the challenger willingly went in for a protracted manoeuvring battle in the 18th game, which by the adjournment took on such an unusual character, that Fine called it the most fantastic of all the games played in matches for the world championship, from La Bourdonnais to Mikhail Tal!

Game 63

D.Bronstein-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1951, 18th game



26 ♕b1

A subtle prelude to the following thunderous combination: the b2-bishop is freed from having to defend the rook at a1.

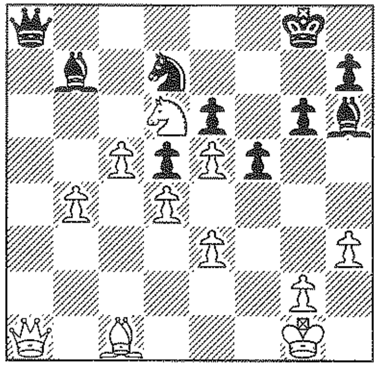
26...♕c8?!

The difference in the two players' thinking is felt: Bronstein was looking for the chance to sacrifice something, whereas Botvinnik considered the capture on b5 not to be dangerous, otherwise he would have replied with 26...♕b8!

27 ♗xb5!!

A purely positional sacrifice: the pair of connected b- and c-pawns will be stronger than the bishop. White's dynamic evaluation proves more correct.

27...♘xe5 28 fxe5 ♗h6 29 ♗c1 cxb5 30 ♘xb5 ♘d7 31 ♘d6 ♖xa1 32 ♕xa1 ♕a8



33 ♕c3

'33 ♕b2! is more accurate, and in the variation 33...♗f8 34 b5 ♗xd6 35 exd6 ♕a4 White can continue 36 ♗d2 ♔f7 37 ♕b4 ♕d1+ 38 ♔h2 ♘f6 39 ♕a5 ♘e4 40 ♗e1 with an obvious win.' (Botvinnik)

Here, in my opinion, the only chance is 37...♕xb4! 38 ♗xb4 ♘b8 39 ♗a5 ♔e8 40 ♗c7 ♘c6! 41 bxc6 ♗xc6. Can Black save this ending with opposite-coloured bishops a pawn down, by creating a fortress? Say, 42 h4 h5? 43 ♔f2 and now 43...♔d7 44 ♔g3 ♗b5 45 ♔f4 ♗e2 46 ♔g5 ♗d1 47 ♔xg6 ♗e2 48 ♔f7 ♗b5 49 ♗a5 ♗a4 50 ♗e1 ♗b5 51 ♗g3 ♗a4 52 ♗f4 ♗b5 53 g4 fxg4 54 ♔g6 g3 55 ♔xh5 g2 56 ♗h2, or 43... ♔f7 44 ♔g3 ♗a4 45 ♔f4 ♗c6 46 ♔e5 ♗a4 47 ♗a5 ♗d7 48 g3 ♗b5 49 d7! (the decisive breakthrough) 49...♗xd7 50 ♔d6 ♗c8 51 c6 ♔e8 52 ♗b6 ♔f7 53 ♔c7 ♗a6 54 ♔d8, and in both cases White triumphs.

The win (if there is one at all) is by no means so obvious after 42...h6!, for example: 43 ♔f2 g5 44 ♔g3 ♔f7 45 ♗d8 ♔g6 46 ♔f2 ♔h5 (46...g4?! 47 ♔g3) 47 ♔e2!? (47 hxg5 hxg5 48 ♔e2 ♔g6 49 ♔d2 g4 50 ♔e1 ♔f7 51 ♔f2 ♔e8 52 ♗g5 ♔d7 53 ♔g3 ♗a4 with a draw) 47...♔xh4 48 ♔d3 ♔g3 49 ♔c3 ♔xg2 50 ♔b4 f4 51 exf4 gxf4 52 ♔a5 e5! 53 ♔b6 ♗a4 54 dxe5 (54 c6 exd4 55 ♗f6 d3 56 ♗c3 f3 57 d7 f2 58 d8♕ f1♕ 59 c7 ♕f2+ 60 ♔a6 ♕a2! is also unclear) 54...d4 55 c6 d3 56 d7 d2 57 ♗h4 d1♕ 58 d8♕ ♕b1+ 59 ♔c7 ♕e4 with sufficient counterplay.

33...♗f8 34 b5 ♗xd6 35 exd6 ♕a4 36 ♕b2

White has only a small plus after 36 c6 ♕xb5 37 cxd7 ♕xd7 38 ♗a3.

36...♔f7 37 ♔h2

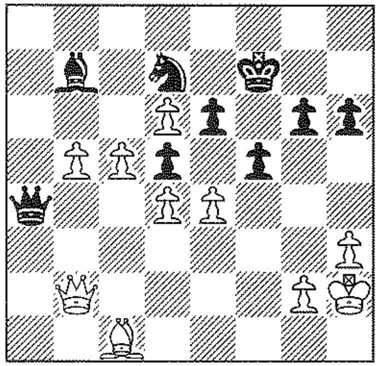
'Indecisiveness in severe time-trouble. White prepares e3-e4 and removes his king from the back rank. Stronger was 37 ♗d2! and 38 ♕b4.' (Bronstein) But if there is no certainty that there was a win in the note to White's 33rd move, why should there be one here?

37...h6

Also in time-trouble. '37...♘f6 38 ♗d2 ♔e8 would apparently have saved the game, since White achieves nothing with either 39 ♕b4 ♕xb4 40 ♗xb4 ♔d7, or 39 c6 ♗xc6 40 bxc6 ♕xc6 41 ♕b8+ ♔d7 42 ♕a7+ ♔c8 43 ♕e7 ♘e4 44 ♕xe6+ ♕d7.' (Botvinnik) But I don't know if Black will escape after 45 ♕xd5 ♕xd6+ 46 ♕xd6 ♘xd6 47 g4! ♔d7 48 gxf5 gxf5 49 ♗b4 ♘e4 50 ♔g2 ♔e6 51 h4 ♘f6 52 ♔f3 with an extra pawn.

38 e4!?

The best practical chance, although again the questionable 38 ♗d2 and ♕b4 was recommended.



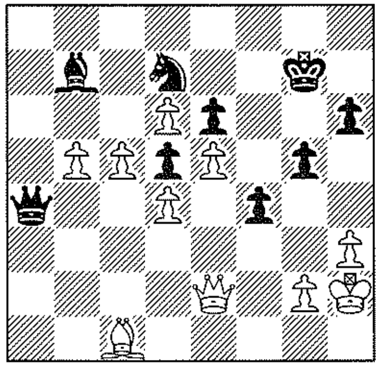
38...f4?

'After 38...dxe4 39 d5! or 38...fxe4 39 ♗xh6 the way into the enemy rear would have been opened for the white queen.' (Botvinnik) On the contrary, it was precisely 38...dxe4!

(but not 38...fxe4? 39 ♕f2+ ♔g8 40 ♕h4 ♕xd4 41 c6 g5 42 ♗xg5 and wins) 39 d5 e3! (the commentators overlooked this move) that would have enabled Black to save the game: 40 ♗xe3 ♗xd5 41 ♕h8 ♕e4 42 ♕h7+ ♔f6, or 40 c6 ♕f4+ 41 ♔g1 (41 g3 ♕xd6) 41...♕xd6 42 dxe6+ ♕xe6 43 cxd7 ♕xd7 44 ♗xe3 with equality.

39 e5 g5 40 ♕e2 ♔g7

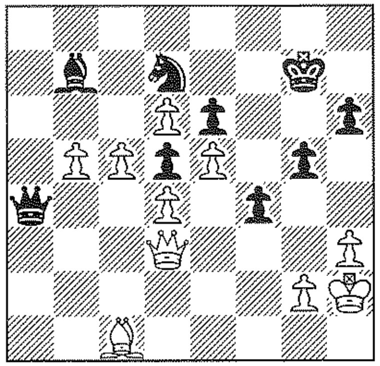
Together with my 'silicon friend' I also looked at 40...♕xd4, but the endgame after 41 c6 ♕xe5 42 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 43 cxb7 ♘d7 44 ♗b2 would appear to be hopeless for Black: 44...e5 45 ♗xe5 ♔e6 46 ♗g7 h5 47 ♗h6 ♔f5 48 ♔g1 d4 49 ♔f2 g4 50 h4 ♔e4 51 ♔e2 ♘b8 52 ♗g5 d3+ 53 ♔d2 ♘d7 54 ♗d8 f3 55 gxf3+ gxf3 56 ♗b6 ♘b8 57 ♗c3 ♘d7 58 ♗a7 ♘b8 59 ♔e1 and wins.



'In this critical position the game was adjourned, and no one, myself included, had any doubts that White would win.' (Botvinnik)

41 ♕d3?

It is hard to reproach White for such a sealed move: why hurry? But now a miracle occurs... Yet he could have won with the simple 41 c6! ♗xc6 42 bxc6 ♕xc6 43 ♗xf4! gxf4 44 ♕g4+ ♔f7 45 ♕xf4+ ♔g7 46 ♕g4+ ♔f7 47 ♕h4! (but not 47 ♕h5+? ♔g7 48 ♕e8 ♘xe5) 47...♘f8 48 ♕xh6, or 43...♕c4 44 ♕xc4 dxc4 45 ♗c1 ♘b6 (Bronstein saw this, but evaluated it... in favour of Black: 'The breakaway pawn at d6 fell out of my field of view – a typical mistake by a player in a state of extreme tension and nervous exhaustion') 46 ♔g3.



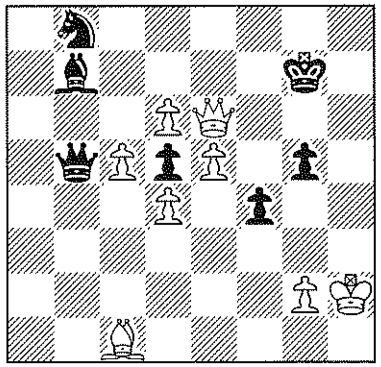
41...♘b8!! (the only way to save the game!) **42 h4 ♕c4 43 ♕h3 ♕xb5!**

But not 43...♕xc1? 44 hxg5 hxg5 45 ♕xe6 ♕e3 46 ♕f6+ ♔h7 47 ♕xg5 ♕g3+ 48 ♕xg3 fxg3+ 49 ♔xg3, winning.

44 hxg5

In the variation 44 ♕xe6 ♕d3 45 ♕f6+ ♔h7 46 ♕f7+ ♔h8 I thought up the slight improvement 47 ♗d2!? ♕g3+ 48 ♔g1, but here too after 48...f3! 49 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 50 gxf3 ♗c8 51 hxg5 hxg5 52 ♗xg5 ♘c6 53 ♗c3 ♔h7 54 ♔f2 ♔g6 Black has a fortress.

44...hxg5 45 ♕xe6



45...♕d3! (the excellent fruit of Black's adjournment analysis: for the moment ...♕g3+ is threatened with perpetual check) **46 ♕f6+ ♔h7 47 ♕f7+**

After 47 ♕xg5 ♕g3+! 48 ♕xg3 fxg3+ 49 ♔xg3 ♗c8 50 ♔f4 ♔g6, then ...♘c6 and ...♗d7 there is again a fortress on the board.

47...♔h8 48 ♕f6+ ♔h7 49 ♗xf4 gxf4 50 ♕f7+ ♔h8 51 ♕e8+ ♔g7 52 ♕e7+ ♔h8 53 ♕e8+ ♔g7 54 ♕e7+ ♔h8 55 ♕f8+ ♔h7 56 ♕f7+ ♔h8 57 ♕xb7 ♕g3+ 58 ♔h1 ½-½

It was now the challenger's turn to be distressed, whereas the champion, by contrast, was heartened. I think that the 19th game was typical of the entire match. Botvinnik gained some advantage from the opening and 'thematically' forced the exchange of queens, but in a manoeuvring endgame White was left with only a symbolic plus within a dozen moves. In the traditional time scramble Bronstein could have several times gained a draw. As, however, he could have done after the resumption, but here he suffered another black-out...

Game 64
M.Botvinnik-D.Bronstein
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1951, 19th game
Grünfeld Defence D74

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 (Black is tired of 1...e6, and of 2...e6) **3 g3 ♗g7**

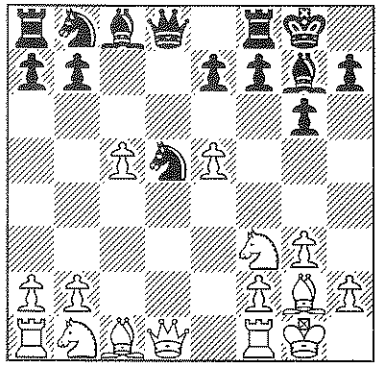
The 23rd game went 3...c6 4 ♗g2 (if 4 d5 Black had prepared 4...b5!?) 4...d5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♘c3 ♗g7 with a solid but tedious position. Later Bronstein criticised himself for this choice: 'My thinking began to doze, like a pike on the riverbed... Of course, I should have played 3...♗g7 4 ♗g2 d6, boldly following the King's Indian motifs of the 21st game.' In my opinion, this prescription would also have been good for the present encounter.

4 ♗g2 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 0-0 c5 (the alternative 7...♘c6 8 e4 ♘b6 9 d5 ♘a5 10 ♘c3 c6 with equality is currently fashionable) **8 e4**

Instead the capture 8 dxc5 (Botvinnik-Zuidema, Amsterdam 1966) 8...♘a6 etc. is unclear.

8...♘f6 (8...♘b6?! 9 d5! was the game Botvinnik-Novotelnov, Moscow 1947) **9 e5 ♘d5 10 dxc5**

If 10 ♕e2 (Najdorf-Boleslavsky, Saltsjöbaden Interzonal 1948), then 10...cxd4! with equality.



10...♘b4?!

This leads to Black falling behind in development. 10...♘c6 11 ♕e2 also favours White, as in the training game Botvinnik-Ragozin (Nikolina Gora 1951), but it is better to play 10...♘a6! with the idea of ...♘xc5, equalising. Black's error is easy to explain: the theory of this variation was only beginning to be developed at that time.

11 ♘c3 ♘8c6 12 a3

'It is useful to drive the enemy knight away from the c2-square, especially since White's queenside pawn majority is his main trump.' (Botvinnik)

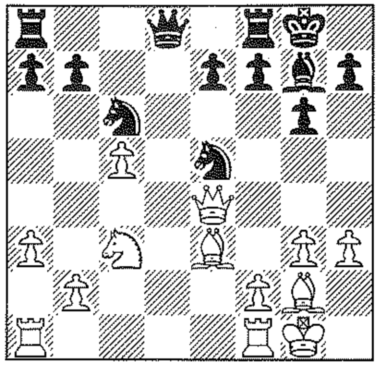
12...♘d3

If 12...♕xd1 13 ♖xd1 ♘c2 14 ♖b1 ♗f5 Botvinnik suggests 15 ♘h4, and if 12...♘a6?! – 13 b4 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗b2 with a growing initiative.

13 ♗e3 ♗g4

But not 13...♘xb2? 14 ♕e2 ♘d3 15 ♖fd1 and wins. 'Black is aiming for control of the key d4-square. Nowadays I would not have exchanged my light-squared bishop for no reason at all, but in those distant times I still believed in the triumph of the dark-squared strategy.' (Bronstein) However, White has the better chances in any case.

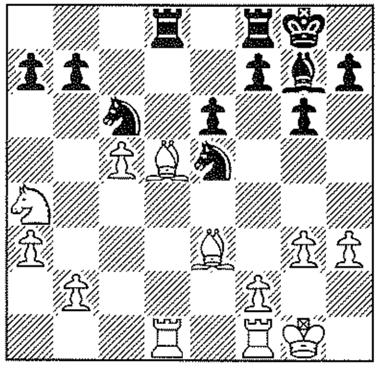
14 h3 ♗xf3 15 ♕xf3 ♘dxe5 16 ♕e4



16...♕d3

'White's centralised queen is so well placed that Black has no alternative – he has to exchange it.' (Botvinnik) But according to Bronstein, '16...♕d7 was the more circumspect move.'

17 ♕a4 ♕c4 (there is no choice: 17...♘c4? 18 ♖ad1 ♘xb2 19 ♖xd3 ♘xa4 20 ♘xa4 and wins) **18 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 19 ♗d5** (depriving the black knight of the c4-square) **19...♕xa4 20 ♘xa4 e6**



21 ♗a2!?

'I considered it essential to retain control of the c4-square. After 21 ♗g2 ♘c4 22 ♗c1 ♘d4 23 ♗xb7 ♘e2+ 24 ♔g2 ♘xc1 25 ♖xc1 ♘xb2 White has no advantage.' (Botvinnik) However in the variation 26 ♘xb2 ♗xb2 27 ♖c4 ♗e5 Black still has to demonstrate a draw. As is also the case after 22...f5 23 ♖fe1 ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♖d8 25 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 26 b3 ♘e5 27 b4 ♘ec6 28 ♗g5 ♔f7 29 b5 ♘e7 etc.

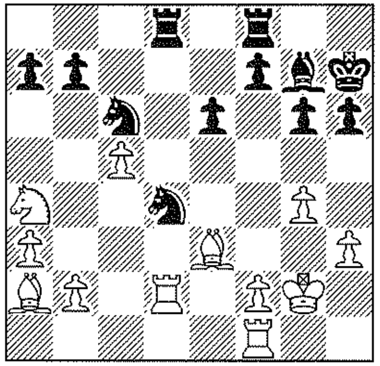
In any event, the two bishops in an open position should promise White an enduring initiative.

21...♘f3+

Aiming for the cherished d4-square. Bronstein recommended 21...♖xd1!? 22 ♖xd1 ♖d8 23 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 followed by the march of his king to c7, but I think that here too after 24 b4 ♘f3+ 25 ♔f1 ♘c6 26 ♗c4 White has some advantage.

22 ♔g2 ♘fd4 23 g4! (not allowing the knight to go to f5) **23...h6 24 ♖d2 ♔h7!**

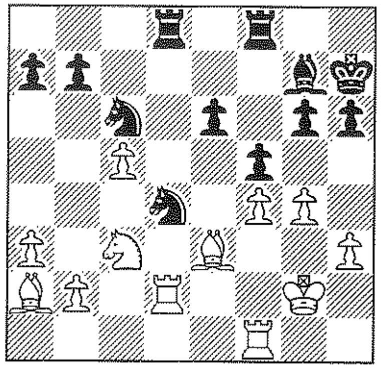
Despite the opponent's prophylactic measures, Black is ready to begin active counterplay with ...f7-f5. It seems to me that this is the most correct course. Bronstein recommended 'coolly waiting – 24...♖d7 25 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 26 b4 ♘b8 27 ♗c4 ♘c2 etc.,' but 26 ♘c3!? is stronger. Passive defence would have suited Botvinnik perfectly well.



25 f4?!

'White should have played 25 ♘c3 f5 26 f3! followed by ♖fd1, when he retains all the advantages of his position.' (Botvinnik) Had his bishop been at g2, it would have been easier to maintain the offensive. In any case, Black's position would have retained a certain reserve of solidity.

25...f5 26 ♘c3 (26 ♖fd1? ♘c2!)

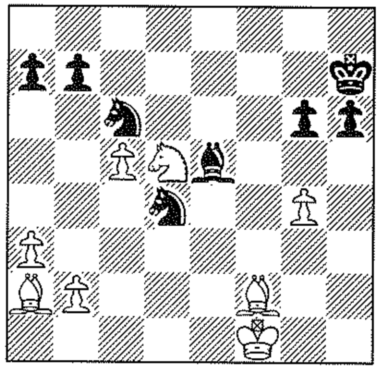


26...e5

Black has been successful in creating tension on the kingside. Now simplification is inevitable.

27 fxe5 ♗xe5 28 ♘d5 (preventing ...f5-f4) **28...fxg4** (28...♔g7 would equalise, but the exchange is also not bad) **29 hxg4 ♖xf1 30 ♔xf1 ♖f8+ 31 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 32 ♗xf2**

32 ♔xf2? did not work because of 32...♘c2 (33 ♗c1 ♗d4+).



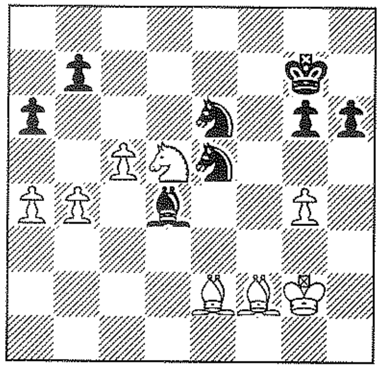
32...a6?!

'A loss of time. The immediate 32...h5! was correct, creating an outside passed pawn.' (Bronstein) Although the game is very close to a draw in any case: for the moment White's two bishops are not felt, and he is unable to latch on to the b7-pawn – there is no way that his bishop can reach c8 from a2.

33 ♔g2 ♔g7 34 ♗c4 ♘e6 35 b4 ♗b2!?

Black is looking for tactical resources, but... 'It would have been simpler to exchange White's last pawn on the kingside by 35...h5.' (Botvinnik)

36 a4 ♘e5 37 ♗e2 ♗d4



38 ♗g3!

'This move wins the game, not in itself, but taking account of the psychological state of the players. White avoids a draw (*38 a5 ♗xf2 39 ♔xf2 ♘d4 40 ♗d1 ♘dc6 41 ♔e3 ♘d7 42 ♗a4 ♘de5 – G.K.*), Black becomes frightened of ghosts, commits one mistake after another, and... loses a valuable point.' (Bronstein)

It is interesting that, as also later in the 23rd game, Botvinnik holds on to the two bishops – apparently, based on the law of averages: he thinks that sooner or later the bishops are bound to tell. And it was in these games with Bronstein that they did so!

38...a5!?

This is acceptable, but again 38...h5! was simpler, with a straightforward draw after 39 gxh5 gxh5 40 ♗xh5 a5 41 bxa5 ♘xc5 42 ♗e8 ♘e4. Here I tried to manoeuvre with the bishops, but without success – there is too little material: 43 ♗e1 ♘f6 44 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 45 ♗b5 ♔e6 or 43 ♗h4 ♘c4 44 ♘c7 ♗c3 45 ♘e6+ ♔g8 46 ♗g6 ♘ed2 47 ♔f2 ♗xa5 48 ♔e2 ♘e5 49 ♗f5 ♔f7 and Black gradually unravels himself.

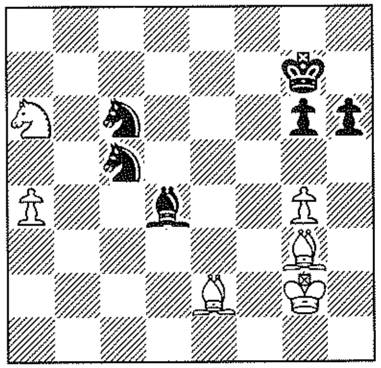
39 bxa5 ♘xc5 40 ♘c7 ♘c6

In my opinion, 40...♔f6!? 41 a6 bxa6 42 a5 ♘c6 43 ♗e1 h5 would also have led to a draw. At this point the game was adjourned and White sealed an obvious move.

'Just as the win for White in the adjourned position of the previous game seemed obvious, so too no one was in any doubt that the present encounter would end in a draw. Indeed there are so few pieces and pawns on the board...' (Botvinnik)

41 a6 bxa6 42 ♘xa6

And here, as in almost every adjournment session in this match, sheer miracles began to occur.

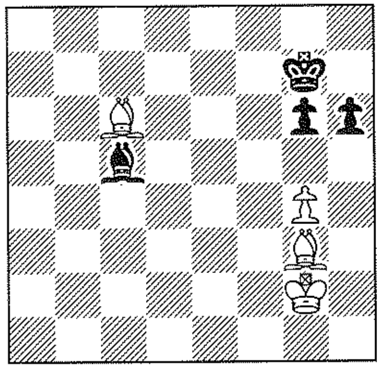


42...♘e4?

It is incomprehensible why, after many hours of analysis, Black did not simply play 42...♘xa4! To be honest, Bronstein's explanation shocks me:

'A strange move, similar in quality to the king move in the sixth game. During a long night I managed to go through all the variations of this fairly straightforward ending in detail. And my first thought was to sacrifice a knight: 42...♘xa4! 43 ♗b5 ♘c5 44 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 45 ♗xc6 h5 46 gxh5 gxh5 with a draw. But just before the resumption, when I was checking the variation, I accidentally placed the white king on f3 and to my surprise noticed (or more correctly, devised) a mistake – after 46 g5, 46...♗e3 was not possible, I would have to play 46....♗e7, but then Botvinnik would play 47 ♗f4 and for a long time would move hither and thither. You can imagine my astonishment when, arriving for the resumption of play, I discovered that I had set up the adjourned position incorrectly. Of course, even after 42...♘e4 the draw is easily obtainable, but my thoughts were a long way from reality.'

This last allusion(?) merely obscures the picture... Firstly, to 'go through all the variations... in detail' of the adjourned position with five pieces, it had to be set up correctly – this was, after all, a match for the world championship! Secondly, let us study more carefully the situation after White's 45th move – the resulting ending is of importance for endgame theory.



Analysis diagram

It is immediately apparent that the suggested move 45...h5?? loses to the simple 46 g5! ♗e3 47 ♗e5+ ♔h7 48 ♗f6. And if in his analysis Bronstein 'accidentally placed the king on f3' (it would be interesting to know, where were his seconds?), then after 46...♗e7 47 ♗f4 it is not clear what is meant by the phrase 'Botvinnik for a long time would move hither and thither': here too White most probably wins, by taking his king to e6 followed by ♗e5+ etc.

Also insufficient is 45...♗e7? 46 ♗f4 ♗f6 47 ♔f3 ♗e7 48 ♔e4 ♗f6 49 ♗e8 ♗c3 50 ♔d5 ♗f6 51 ♔e6 ♗c3 52 ♗c6 ♗b2 53 ♗e4 ♗c3 54 ♔e7 (54 ♗c2!?) 54...♗f6+ (White's task is simplified by 54...g5 55 ♗g3 ♗f6+ 56 ♔e8 ♗c3 57 ♗d5 ♔f6 58 ♗f7 ♗e5 59 ♗f2 ♗c3 60 ♗c5 ♔e5 61 ♗f8 ♔f4 62 ♗h5 and wins) 55 ♔e8 and Black is in zugzwang: 55...♗d4 56 ♗d6 ♔f6 (56...h5 57 g5) 57 ♗e7+ ♔g7 58 ♗f8+, or 55...♗h4 56 ♗d6 h5 (56...♔f6 57 ♗e7+ ♔e5 58 ♗xg6!) 57 ♗f8+ ♔g8 58 gxh5 gxh5 59 ♗d5+ ♔h7 60 ♔f7, mating. A pretty win, and a rare material situation!

And only the accurate 45...♗e3! (suggested by Goldberg, Botvinnik's second) leads to the desired draw:

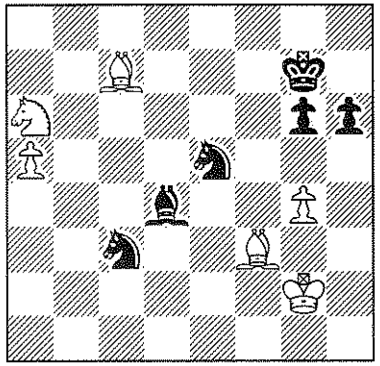
1) 46 ♗e5+ ♔f7! (but not 46...♔h7? 47 ♗f6 or 47 ♗e4+) 47 ♗d5+ ♔e7 48 ♔f3 ♗g5 49 ♗f4 ♗xf4 50 ♔xf4 ♔f6 51 ♗e4 g5+ 52 ♔g3 h5 with a draw;

2) 46 ♗h4 h5 47 g5 ♗c1 48 ♔f3 ♗d2 49 ♔e4 ♗c1 50 ♔e5 ♗d2 51 ♔e6 ♗c1 with a draw (the black bishop cannot be separated from the g5-pawn);

3) 46 ♔f3 ♗g5 47 ♗f4 ♗xf4 48 ♔xf4 g5+ 49 ♔f5 h5! with a draw (Goldberg), or 47 ♗e5+ ♔f7! 48 ♗d5+ ♔e7 49 ♗f4 ♗xf4 50 ♔xf4 ♔f6 51 ♗e4 g5+ 52 ♔g3 h5 with a draw.

Bronstein's assertion about an 'easily obtainable' draw after 42...♘e4 is also questionable: White does after all have a passed pawn, and the draw is achieved by a series of virtually only moves.

43 ♗c7 ♘c3 44 ♗f3 ♘e5 45 a5

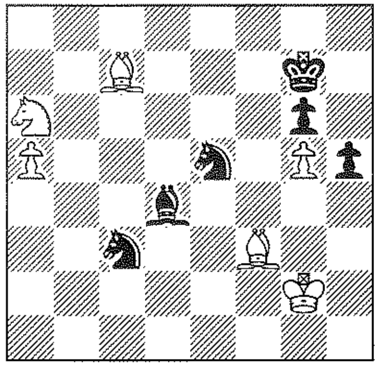


45...h5?!

'The simplest way to draw was by 45...♘xf3 (*45...♔f7? 46 ♗b6 – G.K.*) 46 ♔xf3 ♔f6! and only then ...h6-h5 (but not immediately 46...h5?! 47 g5!). Then Black could have calmly given up a piece for the a-pawn.' (Botvinnik) The move played does not yet lose, but it creates unnecessary difficulties.

46 g5

White preserves his last chance.



46...♘c4?

'A suicidal decision! Both of Black's knights lack strong points and they are unable to oppose the active white bishops.' (Botvinnik) However, here 46...♘xf3 47 ♔xf3 is now in White's favour, and therefore, according to Bronstein, 46...♘b5! was necessary, although the drawing path is no longer so simple:

1) 47 ♗d8 ♘f7 48 ♗e7 (48 ♗b6 ♘xg5) 48...♗c3 49 ♘b4 ♘xg5 50 ♗e2 ♘c7 51 a6 ♘xa6 52 ♘xa6 ♗f6 with a draw;

2) 47 ♗b6 ♘c4 48 ♘c7! (stronger than 48 ♗d8 ♗c3, as given by Bronstein) 48...♘xb6! (by sacrificing a piece, Black creates a fortress) 49 ♘xb5 ♗e3 50 axb6 ♗xb6 51 ♘d6 ♗e3 52 ♘e4 ♗f4 53 ♗e2 ♗c1 54 ♔g3 ♗e3! (latching on to the g5-pawn and forcing White to guard it with his knight or king) 55 ♔h4 ♔f8 56 ♗c4 ♔g7 57 ♗e6 ♔f8 with a draw.

47 ♘b4 ♘b5 48 ♗d8 ♔f8

'It was not yet too late for the manoeuvre 48...♗c3 49 ♘c6 ♘d4 50 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 51 a6 ♘d6 52 ♗c6 ♘c8 53 ♗d7 ♘a7, blockading the a-pawn.' (Bronstein) Alas, it is too late – this position is lost: 54 ♗e7! ♔f7 55 ♗d6 ♗e3 56 ♔f3 ♗d4 57 ♔e4 ♗f2 58 ♔d5 ♗b6 59

♗c5 ♗xc5 60 ♔xc5 ♔e7 61 ♗h3. It is also possible simply to win a piece by 50 ♗f6+ ♔h7 51 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 52 ♘xd4 ♘xa5 53 ♗d5 and the knight is offside.

49 ♘c6 ♗c5

The best chance, not mentioned by the commentators, was 49...♔e8, although after 50 ♗e4! ♔d7 51 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 52 ♗f6 ♘c6 53 a6 White wins all the same.

50 ♗e2 (as Botvinnik writes, the pursuit of the knights begins) **50...♘e3+**

It was no better to play 50...♘bd6 51 ♗e7+ ♔e8 52 ♗xc4 or 50...♘cd6 51 ♗e7+ ♔e8 52 ♗xb5.

51 ♔f3 ♘d4+ 52 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 53 ♗d3 (or 53 ♗b6! and wins) **53...♘g4** (53...♔f7 54 ♗b6!) **54 ♗xg6 ♘e5+ 55 ♔e4 ♘c6**

After 55...♘xg6 56 ♔xd4 the a-pawn cannot be stopped.

56 ♗b6 (but not 56 ♗xh5? ♘xd8 57 ♔xd4 ♘c6+) **56...♗xb6** (or 56...♗c3 57 a6 ♗d2 58 ♔f5 ♘e7+ 59 ♔e6 ♘c6 60 ♗e4) **57 axb6 h4 58 ♗f5 ♔e7 59 ♔f4 ♔d6 60 ♗e4 1-0**

A gripping duel!

In the 20th game there was a quiet, although by no means peaceful draw, and in the 21st the challenger finally chose his favourite King's Indian Defence: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♘c3 e5 4 ♘f3 ♘bd7 5 g3 g6 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 e4 c6 9 h3** (9 d5 cxd5 10 cxd5 ♘c5 11 ♕c2 a5 with equality, Botvinnik-Bronstein, 14th USSR Championship, Moscow 1945) **9...♘h5?!** (again with the aim of confusing the opponent) **10 ♗e3 ♕e7 11 ♘h2?!** (11 ♖e1!) **11...♔h8 12 ♖e1 a6 13 a3?! ♖b8 14 ♗f1 ♘hf6 15 ♕d2 b5 16 cxb5 axb5 17 ♖ad1 ♘b6 18 ♗h6? ♗xh6 19 ♕xh6 ♗e6 20 ♘f3 ♗b3 21 ♖d2 ♘fd7** and Black converted his positional advantage. The scores were now equal again: 10½-10½.

It is strange that Bronstein did not play the King's Indian from the very start of the match: after all, it would have helped him to exploit his better training more effectively. Botvinnik, educated on the classics of that time, played this dynamic opening uncertainly, as is shown by his later games with Geller (*Game No.93*), Smyslov (*Game No.106*) and Tal (*Game No.127*). Only many years later did Bronstein disclose that his seconds had forbidden him to employ his favourite schemes (fearing that these would not work against Botvinnik), and he admitted: 'Of course, I should have played both the King's Indian, and 1 e4 – this was my most powerful weapon, and my imagination shows itself best of all in the open games.'

Anyway, in the 22nd game the discussion in the Dutch Defence was renewed. Holding the psychological initiative and bearing in mind his opponent's extreme fatigue, Bronstein again transferred the weight of the struggle to the pre-time-trouble phase, postponing decisive action until the fifth hour of play.

Game 65
D.Bronstein-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1951, 22nd game
Dutch Defence A91

1 d4 e6 2 c4 (2 e4!?) **2...f5** (something of a *tabiya* of this match) **3 g3**

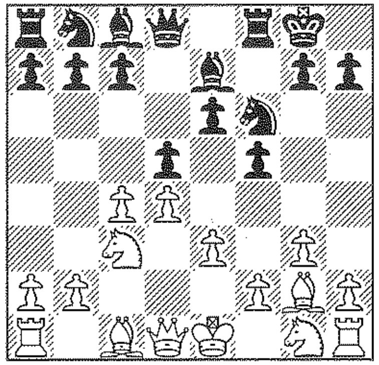
Copying Botvinnik's play in the first and ninth games of the match. Before this Bronstein himself had unsuccessfully tried 3 ♘c3 (10th game) and 3 e3 (12th game).

3...♘f6 4 ♗g2 ♗e7 5 ♘c3 (5 ♘f3 is more standard) **5...0-0 6 e3**

The ninth game went 6 d5 (a novelty!) 6...♗b4 (6...e5!?) 7 ♗d2 e5 8 e3 d6 9 ♘ge2 a6!? 10 ♕c2 ♕e8 11 f3 b5 with double-edged, to some extent 'King's Indian' play.

6...d5

In the first game Bronstein replied 6...d6 and after 7 ♘ge2 c6 8 0-0 e5 9 d5 ♕e8! 10 e4 ♕h5 11 exf5 ♗xf5 he achieved an excellent position, again in the spirit of King's Indian set-ups! For his part, Botvinnik twice preferred to switch to the 'stonewall'.

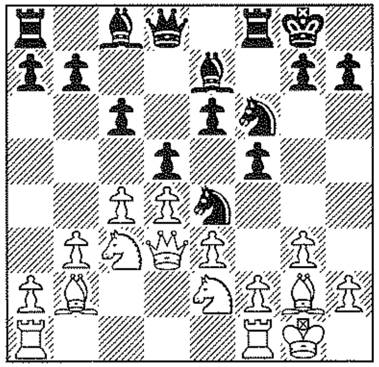


7 ♘ge2 c6 (7...dxc4?! 8 ♕a4) **8 b3 ♘e4**

An attempted improvement. The 16th game went 8...♗d6 9 0-0 ♕e7 10 ♕c2 ♘e4 11 ♘d1!? ♘a6 12 ♘b2 ♗d7 13 c5 ♗c7 14 ♘d3 ♗e8 15 b4 with a spatial advantage for White.

9 0-0 ♘d7 10 ♗b2 ♘df6 11 ♕d3

'The immediate 11 f3! is more subtle. After 11...♘xc3 12 ♘xc3 White carries out the breakthrough in the centre, without moving his queen, while if 11...♘d6, only then 12 ♕d3 and e3-e4.' (Boleslavsky)



11...g5!?

'Botvinnik's standard move in the Dutch Defence.' (Bronstein) Black's idea is not so much to attack, but to support the knight at e4 by ...g5-g4. However, it would have been sounder to exploit White's previous move: 11...♗d7! 12 f3 ♘xc3 13 ♘xc3 ♗e8! 14 e4 fxe4 15 fxe4 ♗g6.

12 cxd5

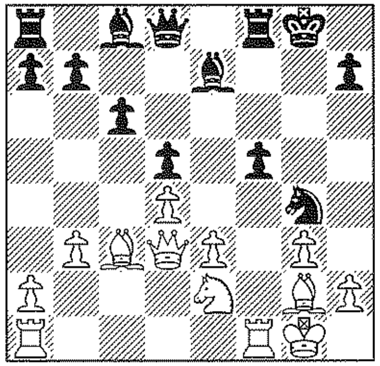
Here too Boleslavsky recommended 12 f3!? – 12...♘xc3 13 ♘xc3 g4 14 fxg4 ♘xg4 15 e4! fxe4 16 ♘xe4 dxe4 17 ♗xe4 with a dangerous attack for the piece, which is also confirmed by the computer.

12...exd5 (12...cxd5!?) **13 f3 ♘xc3**

'If 13...♘d6, there of course follows 14 e4!' (Sveshnikov) However, after 14...dxe4 15 fxe4 fxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♘dxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗h3 it is hard to talk of any real advantage for White.

14 ♗xc3 (14 ♘xc3 g4!) **14...g4** (suppressing e3-e4 and securing the e4-square for the second knight) **15 fxg4 ♘xg4**

The mutual weaknesses make this position somewhat 'ragged', and in such a complex, unclear battle Botvinnik was inferior to Bronstein.



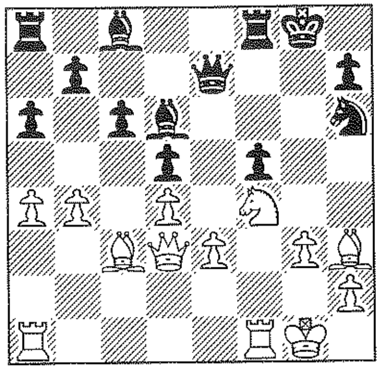
16 ♗h3! (preventing the manoeuvre ...♘f6-e4) **16...♘h6**

This looks like a loss of time: why take the knight far away from the cherished e4-square? It was possible to play 16...♗d6 (16...h5?! 17 ♘f4), and after 17 ♘f4 ♕e7 18 ♖ae1 ♗d7 Black is alright, while in the event of 17 ♗xg4!? fxg4 18 e4 ♗e6 (18...dxe4? 19 ♕c4+ ♔g7 20 d5+) 19 e5 ♗e7 20 ♘f4 ♕d7 it is doubtful whether White, with his 'bad' dark-squared bishop, has any real positional advantage. However, Botvinnik was aiming to avoid such an opening up of the game.

17 ♘f4 ♗d6 18 b4

Embarking on a plan of giving the opponent weaknesses on the queenside. White has a slight but persistent initiative.

18...a6 19 a4 ♕e7



20 ♖ab1

With the intention of b4-b5. The immediate 20 b5!? axb5 21 axb5 ♖xa1 22 ♖xa1 ♘g4 23 ♗d2 was also interesting, but Bronstein evidently did not want to hurry with exchanges.

20...b5

Now on this part of the board White acquires a serious bonus – the a-file. I would have preferred 20...♗d7, for example: 21 b5 axb5 22 axb5 ♘g4 with the idea of ...♖a3 or ...♖a2

21 ♗g2

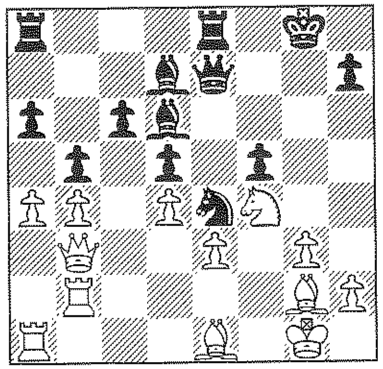
'The Moor has done his duty...' All the same, the knight manoeuvre h6-g4-f6-e4 cannot be prevented. The recommendation of grandmaster Sveshnikov 21 ♖fe1 ♘g4 22 ♗xg4 (otherwise 22...♘f6! 23 ♗xf5?! ♗xf5 24 ♕xf5 ♘e4) 22...fxg4 23 e4? does not hold water in view of the simple 23...dxe4 with ...♗f5 to follow.

21...♘g4 22 ♗d2 ♘f6 23 ♖b2 ♗d7

Bronstein called this move inaccurate and recommended 23...♘e4 – in this way 'Black would have forced White either to retreat his bishop to e1, which breaks the connection between his rooks, or to lose his important bishop.' But I wouldn't begrudge giving up the bishop: after 24 ♖a1! ♘xd2 25 ♕xd2 followed by ♘d3 and ♗f3 Black faces the same problem – a complete absence of counterplay!

24 ♖a1 ♘e4 25 ♗e1 ♖fe8 (Sveshnikov suggested 25...♔h8 with the idea of 26...♗xf4)

26 ♕b3



26...♔h8

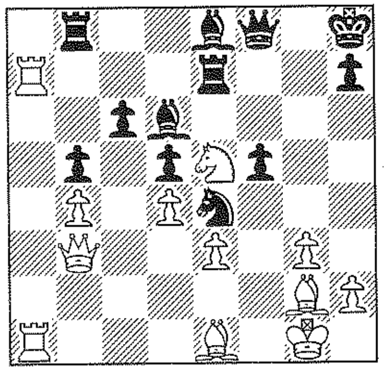
Here too 26...♗xf4!? was possible. 'Black was probably afraid of ♗e1-h4.' (Bronstein) Or Botvinnik was convinced that as it was he would hold this position.

27 ♖ba2 ♕f8 28 ♘d3! ♖ab8 29 axb5 axb5 30 ♖a7 ♖e7 31 ♘e5

White has broken into the enemy camp with both his knight, and his rook on the only open file. But Black's position, although unpleasant, is still fairly solid.

31...♗e8

It is dangerous to play 31...♗xe5 32 dxe5, while if 31...♕g7, then 32 ♖a8 is good. The culminating point of the entire game has been reached.



32 g4!!

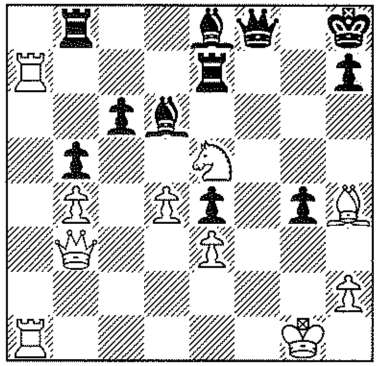
'Botvinnik has assiduously defended all his weaknesses on the queenside, and suddenly Bronstein strikes a shattering blow on another part of the battlefield, which creates a great impression. The world champion's position collapses within a few moves.' (Flohr) 'The bishop at e1 comes decisively into play.' (Sveshnikov)

Indeed, this very fine blow is evidence of Bronstein's amazing intuition and resourcefulness, his ability to play over the entire board. It is clear that Botvinnik did not even consider 32 g4 and that this move shook him – at the height of another time scramble! Hence his rapid defeat... Here it is, the basic distinction between a human and a machine: with a computer nothing 'collapses' and no 'decisive effect' is seen.

32...fxg4?!

The machine considers the fearless 32...♗xe5!? to be necessary: 33 dxe5 ♖g7! (but not 33...♗g6?! 34 ♗xe4 fxe4 35 ♕c3 ♖e6 36 ♗h4 ♕f3 37 ♗f6+ ♖xf6 38 exf6 ♕xg4+ 39 ♔f2 ♕f3+ 40 ♔e1 ♔g8 41 ♖a8 ♕h1+ 42 ♔d2 ♕g2+ 43 ♔c1 ♕f1+ 44 ♔b2 ♕e2+ 45 ♕c2 and wins), for example: 34 ♖xg7 ♕xg7 35 gxf5 ♕xe5 36 ♖a7 ♔g8! and Black has his potential trumps (the bishop at f7 is covering the seventh rank), or 34 gxf5 ♕xf5 35 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 36 ♖a7+ ♗f7 37 ♕c2 with some advantage, but by no means a guaranteed win for White.

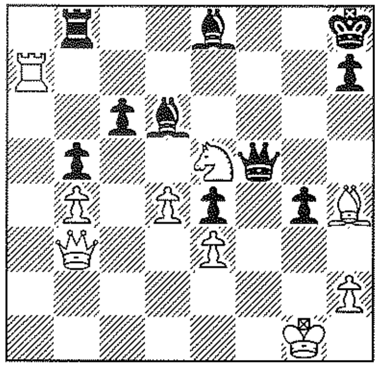
33 ♗xe4 dxe4 34 ♗h4!



But now Black's position is indeed very difficult, although he is not without practical saving chances.

34...♖xe5?

A blunder, after which the game concludes. 34...♖g7? 35 ♕e6! was also weak, but White would have been set more difficult problems by 34...♖xa7 35 ♖xa7 ♕f5.



Analysis diagram

Now both 36 ♘f7+? ♗xf7 37 ♖xf7 ♕d5! and 36 ♖f7?! ♗xf7 37 ♘xf7+ ♔g7 38 ♘xd6 ♕f3 39 ♗g3 ♖a8 are bad, so Bronstein suggested 36 ♗g3, 'when there is no defence against 37 ♖f7.' Is that so? In my opinion, in the variation 36...♖d8 37 ♖f7 ♕g5 38 ♖f4 ♕g8! 39 ♕xg8+ ♔xg8 40 ♖xg4+ ♔f8 White's advantage is insufficient for a win.

It would appear that only the paradoxical machine move 36 ♕a2!! is decisive. Typical computer geometry: the queen bursts into play from an unexpected side. Black is in zugzwang: after 36...♖c8 there is now 37 ♖f7!, while if 36...♗xb4 (or 36...♗f8), then 37 ♘f7+ ♗xf7 38 ♖xf7 ♕d5 (closing the diagonal) 39 ♕a7! and wins.

Another defensive try is 35...♕h6 36 ♗g3 (36 ♘f7+? ♗xf7 37 ♕xf7 ♕xe3+ 38 ♗f2 ♕h6 with a draw) 36...♖d8, and although after 37 ♗f4 ♕f6 38 ♕c2 White has a powerful initiative, it still needs to be transformed into a win.

These variations merely emphasise the

strength of the move 32 g4!! Here the difference in styles is apparent: as White, Botvinnik would have looked for a way to exploit the weakness of the c6-pawn etc., whereas Bronstein was thinking how, with the help of the 'dead' bishop at e1, to announce mate to the king at h8! A remarkable type of thinking...

35 dxe5 ♗xe5 36 ♖f1 ♕g8

Or 36...♕h6 37 ♖f5! ♗g7 (37...♗xh2+ 38 ♔g2) 38 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 39 ♕b2+ ♔g8 40 ♕a2+.

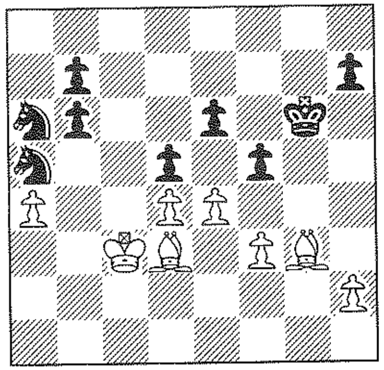
37 ♗g3! (a final, also highly spectacular blow) **37...♗g7 38 ♕xg8+ 1-0**

This was 'cunning Devik's' finest hour! Displaying tactical and psychological refinement, he was able to set his opponent problems that were hard to solve. Botvinnik was still thinking in the more static categories of the 1930s and 1940s, and his break from playing also told. I think that this match brought many things to light to the champion, and in the future he was able to draw the appropriate conclusions.

Thus, Bronstein took the lead: 11½-10½. To become world champion, he needed to gain two draws or win the 23rd game with Black. But for Botvinnik only a win would do, and he must certainly have mentally repeated his diary recording: 'Let's go! Composure and pressure – "The motherland is in danger!" '

Outwardly the battle proceeded quietly, but with enormous inner tension, which restrained the two players. On the 17th move an equal multi-piece endgame was reached, after which Black could more than once have practically forced a draw. 'But I, as in many other games of the match, got into time-trouble,' Botvinnik recalls, 'and here (*on the 35th move – G.K.*) an ill-fated idea occurred to Bronstein: why not go in for the win of a pawn, in order to achieve complete success in this game and victoriously conclude the match ahead of schedule?' However, the two mighty bishops proved more important that the pawn, and by the time of the adjournment White had gained a marked advantage.

Game 66
M.Botvinnik-D.Bronstein
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1951, 23rd game



42 ♗d6?

This move was sealed after lengthy thought. 'Night-time analysis showed that after 42 ♗b1! ♘c6 (if 42...♘c4, then 43 ♗f4 ♔f6 44 ♗a2) 43 exd5 exd5 44 ♗a2 ♘ab4 45 ♗b3 or 44...♘c7 45 ♗h4 Black loses a pawn. And after 42...fxe4 43 fxe4 dxe4 44 ♗xe4+ ♔g7 an interesting variation was pointed out by Flohr: 45 ♗xb7! ♘xb7 46 ♔c4 ♔f7 47 ♔b5 ♘ac5 48 dxc5 ♘xc5 49 a5 and wins.' (Botvinnik)

But at the board Mikhail Moiseevich did not see the win: according to an eye-witness, on leaving the stage he said in a dispirited voice to his second, Goldberg: 'All is lost...'

The amazing story of what happened after this was told to me by Mark Taimanov. When Botvinnik left the hall, his other second, Salo Flohr rushed up to him and joyfully reported that he had looked at the adjourned position and that 42 ♗b1 wins. Mikhail Moiseevich nodded: 'Good,' and they set off to Botvinnik's place. Here Flohr began demonstrating some variations and Botvinnik said in reply: 'Good, I'll have a look. You go home and also have a look...' And Flohr, now at his own place, spent the entire night analysing the position after 42 ♗b1 and came to the conclusion that White had a clear win in every variation. In the morning he again arrived at Botvinnik's place, and the latter, who had also been working all night, said: 'You know, I'm rather tired, Salomonchik. I need to rest. You show these variations to Ganochka.' Flohr was surprised: of course, the champion's wife Gayane Davidovna was a kind, dedicated woman, but what did she know about chess? Even so, he tried to explain how today Misha should win the adjourned position... Then they had lunch, got in the car and set off for the adjournment session. In the car Flohr continued pouring out variations – Botvinnik merely nodded his head. And only at the very entrance to the hall did he divulge with his characteristic, mechanical intonation: 'You know, Salomonchik, I sealed a different move.' Flohr could not restrain himself and he burst into tears...

A dreadful story. What a vivid illustration of character, what an indoctrination of the Stalin era: no one can be trusted, not even your most devoted friend! Botvinnik's suspiciousness was legendary. As, however, was his ultra-fastidiousness. On occasions he would not accept analysis from one of his seconds without... a signature. 'He was always like that,' recalls grandmaster Shamkovich. 'Dry, ascetic and pedantic, not allowing himself anything in life, and capable of driving himself to exhaustion, if the goal demanded this. He was equally harsh with respect to others... A striking feature of him was his cold, penetrating eyes. If Botvinnik wanted or demanded something, it was impossible to force him to abandon this demand. It was not that he put forward any irrefutable argument; no, he simply possessed an iron ability to stick to his guns.'

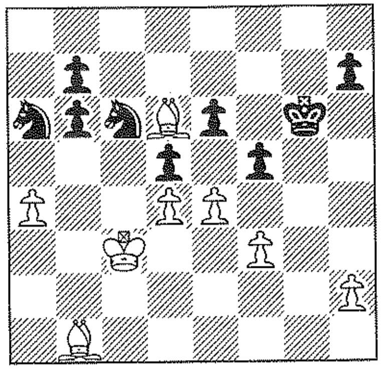
For him chess was not only an 'inexact problem,' but also an endless war! Not long before his death, Botvinnik revealed to grandmaster Sosonko his feelings about his opponents in his chess career of over 65 years:

'In Leningrad they were all then pupils of Romanovsky, but I did not go to the club, for which Romanovsky hated me... With Levenfish too relations were very frosty... Bogatychuk – he hated Soviet power – was an unscrupulous person. I lost to him in 1927, and then a further two times... With Euwe relations were frosty, when we were rivals, for example, in Groningen in 1946... The first with whom I severed all contact was Bronstein: during our match he behaved scandalously. He would make a move and quickly go behind the stage, then he would suddenly dart out and again hide himself. There was laughter in the auditorium, and this interfered with my play. And regarding the fact that during the 23rd game he was thinking more about the fate of his father, he was prompted to say this by Vainstein – his evil genius. Vainstein was a dreadful man, simply dreadful; he hated me, and he did not want me to become world champion... During the last few years I have begun to relate normally to Bronstein, but he still hates me... With Petrosian too I had no relations after he had behaved quite improperly during our match... With Smyslov I also had sharp relations... I was on good terms with Karpov, but then they deteriorated when he began asserting that there was no such thing as the Soviet School of Chess. And later, when he began oppressing Kasparov, I took Kasparov's side... (*In 1988 he again took Karpov's side – G.K.*). Garry now plays worse than he did ten years ago... He used to play like Capablanca, as I taught him, by position... But it has already happened that people have turned their back on me; in the end I helped Kasparov not because of his personal qualities, but because he is a wonderful player... With whom would I like to remain on a desert island, Karpov or Kasparov? If I had to choose between Karpov of the time when he was champion and Kasparov the champion, I would prefer to remain alone on the island...'

However, let us return to the adjournment session of this historic game, one of the most important in the careers of both these great players:

42...♘c6 43 ♗b1

The culminating point of the entire match!



43...♔f6?

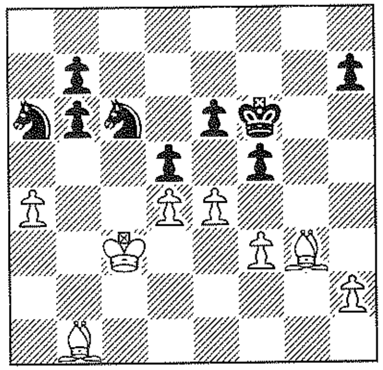
'Had Bronstein suspected that an unpleasant surprise had been prepared for him, he would possibly have found 43...♘a7! (in my analysis I underestimated the strength of this move) 44 exd5 exd5 45 ♗a2 b5 46 a5 (*46 ♗xd5 bxa4 47 ♗c4 ♔f6 with a draw – G.K.*) 46...b4+! 47 ♔d3 ♘b5 48 ♗e5 ♘ac7 49 ♔c2 ♔f7 50 ♔b3 ♘a6 and could then have gained a draw and, in all probability, become the seventh world champion.' (Botvinnik)

True, 50 ♔b3? is a rather absurd move and obviously stronger is 50 ♗xc7! (as Euwe taught, one of the advantages of the two bishops is that they can be exchanged at a convenient moment!) 50...♘xc7 51 ♔b3. Now Black cannot play 51...♘a6?! 52 ♔a4 ♔e6 53 ♔b5 ♘b8 (53...♔d6 54 ♔b6) 54 ♔b6 ♘c6 55 a6, and there only remains 51...♔e6 52 ♔xb4 ♔d6 53 ♗b1 f4 (53...♘e6?! 54 ♗xf5 ♘xd4 55 ♗xh7 ♘xf3 56 h3 is inferior) 54 ♗xh7 (54 h4 ♘e6 55 ♔c3 h6 56 ♗f5 ♘d8 with a draw) 54...♘e6 55 ♔b5. Black still has some work to do: 55...♘xd4+ (but not 55...♔c7?! 56 h3 ♘xd4+ 57 ♔c5 ♘xf3 58 ♔xd5 ♘g5 59 ♗f5 f3 60 h4 f2 61 ♗d3 ♘f3 62 h5 ♘h2 63 ♔e6! ♘g4 64 ♔f5 ♘h6+ 65 ♔f4 and wins) 56 ♔b6 ♘xf3 57 ♔xb7 ♘e5 58 a6 f3 (58...♘c6? 59 ♗d3 f3 60 h4 and wins) 59 a7 f2 60 a8♕ f1♕ 61 ♕b8+ ♔e6 62 ♗g8+ ♘f7! 63 ♕e8+ ♔d6 64 ♗xf7 ♕b1+ with perpetual check, since after the exchange of queens White has bishop and h-pawn of the wrong corner.

Yes, Bronstein lacked competitive fortune... Had Caissa been more kindly disposed to him in this endgame, chess development would possibly have gone in a somewhat different direction. As David Ionovich himself later joked: 'If I had won against Botvinnik, they would all have listened to me with their mouths agape!'

44 ♗g3!!

Only not 44 ♗f4 ♘c7 with a draw.



44...fxe4?

After this, to the delight of the bishops, the position is opened up and now there is definitely no way of saving the game. Both 44...♘c7? 45 ♗h4+ ♔f7 46 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 47 exd5 and 44...♘ab4? 45 ♗e5+! ♔g6 46 ♗d6 ♘a6 47 exd5 exd5 48 ♗a2 are bad as well. I also examined 44...♔g5?! 45 exd5 exd5 46 ♗a2 ♘ab4 (or 46...f4 47 h4+ ♔f5 48 ♗b1+) 47 ♗b3 f4 48 ♗e1 ♔f5 49 ♗d2 ♔g5 50 ♗c1! h5 51 ♗a3 and 44...h5!? 45 h3! (but not 45 h4 ♘c7!) and Black is again in zugzwang.

This last variation suggested to me the best chance – 44...h6! 45 ♗f4 h5, and after 46 exd5 exd5 47 h4 ♔e6 or 46 h4 fxe4 47 fxe4 e5 48 dxe5+ ♔e6 49 exd5+ ♔xd5 50 e6 ♔xe6 51 ♔c4 ♘c5 the win slips away.

45 fxe4 h6 46 ♗f4 h5 47 exd5 exd5 48 h4 ♘ab8 (or 48...♘e7 49 ♗g5+ ♔e6 50 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 51 ♗g6 b5 52 axb5 ♘c7 53 b6 ♘a8 54 ♗xh5 ♘xb6 55 ♗f3 ♔f6 56 ♔b4 and wins) **49 ♗g5+ ♔f7 50 ♗f5! ♘a7**

After the more cunning 50...♘e7 there is a choice between 51 ♗h3 ♘bc6 52 ♗g2 ♔g7 53 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 54 ♔b4 ♘c6+ 55 ♔b5 ♘xd4+ 56 ♔xb6 and 51 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 52 ♗g6 ♘c6 53 ♗xh5 ♘a7 54 ♔b4.

51 ♗f4 ♘bc6 52 ♗d3 ♘c8 53 ♗e2 ♔g6 54 ♗d3+ (a repetition of moves in time-trouble) **55...♔f6 55 ♗e2 ♔g6 56 ♗f3 ♘6e7**

'Or 56...♘8e7 57 ♗g5 (57 ♗c7 ♘f5 58 ♗xd5 ♘fxd4 59 ♗xb6 is also good) 57...♘f5 58 ♗xd5 ♘fxd4 59 ♗e4+ ♔f7 60 ♔c4.' (Botvinnik)

57 ♗g5 1-0

After 40 minutes' thought Black resigned. Why so early? 'Depressed by the fact that I did not play 43...♘a7 and fell into a prepared variation, I completely lost heart,' Bronstein explained years later. 'And yet 57...♘c6 58 ♗xd5 ♘d6 59 ♗f3 ♔f5 60 ♗c1 (pointed out by Smyslov) 60...b5 61 ♗xc6 bxc6 62 a5 would still have had to be found at the board.'

Botvinnik thus agonisingly levelled the scores, but Bronstein still had one chance – to win 'to order' with White in the 24th game. A well-known thesis states 'last games are never won,' which I had to refute in my fourth match with Karpov (Seville 1987); moreover, the day before I, like Bronstein, had suffered a heavy defeat. Of course, David Ionovich still harboured some hopes, especially since the three previous games had ended decisively and with a struggle of such intensity anything could happen.

Game 67

D.Bronstein-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1951, 24th game
Slav Defence D44

1 d4

'I spent the entire day before the decisive game in the forest, breathing fresh air and polishing some sharp variations of the French Defence on my pocket set. Therefore I should have played 1 e4! However, I had certain doubts: suppose Black should play 1...e5 or 1...c5 instead? Nevertheless, in the given instance 1 d4 was a mistake: I shouldn't have followed the path of Botvinnik. It would have been more sensible to trust in my own imagination, intuition and will-to-win.' (Bronstein)

The challenger's actions show that he was somewhat depressed after missing a draw. In principle, in 1951 it was possible to play any opening: the main thing was to have a genuinely strong desire to fight!

1...d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4

In this decisive game Botvinnik plays... the Botvinnik Variation! A more dangerous one cannot be imagined, but the world champion believed in his analyses, and in the correctness of his conception.

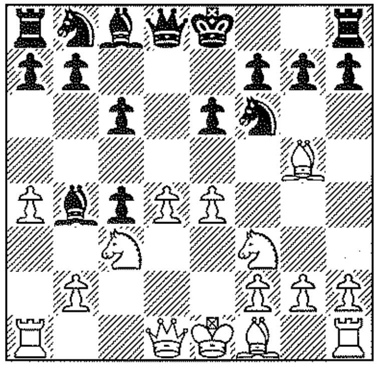
6 a4

Avoiding the critical 6 e4!, for which Black was prepared (cf. *Game No.68*). 'What did I know about this variation in comparison with Botvinnik? Precisely nothing.' (Bronstein).

6...♗b4

In the 1990s the following line appeared: 6...b5!? 7 axb5 (7 e4 b4 8 ♘b1 ♗a6 9 ♕c1 c3 etc. is unclear) 7...cxb5 8 ♘xb5 ♕b6 9 ♘a3 (9 ♘c3 ♕xb2 10 ♗d2 ♘d5!) 9...♕xb2 10 ♘xc4 ♗b4+ with equality.

7 e4

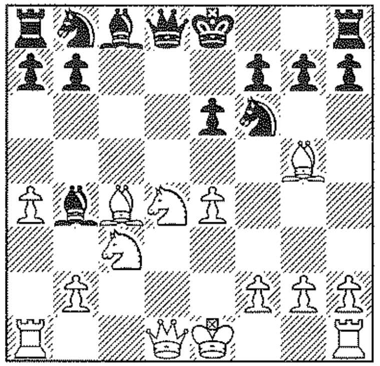


7...c5!

A timely blow at the centre, leading to the Vienna Variation of the Queen's Gambit with the not very useful move a2-a4. Bronstein was hoping for the sharp continuation 7...b5 8 e5 h6 9 exf6 hxg5 10 fxg7 ♖g8 11 h4!, evaluating it in White's favour. This evaluation remains correct even today!

8 ♗xc4 (after 8 e5?! cxd4 9 exf6 gxf6 the drawbacks of the white pawn's position at a4 are again apparent) **8...cxd4 9 ♘xd4**

Had the pawn been at a2, 10 ♕a4+ would have been threatened, but as it is...



9...h6!

'This move retained the world chess crown for Botvinnik. In my preparations for the game I thought that Simagin's "Vienna" Variation was obligatory – 9...♕a5?! 10 ♗xf6 ♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 12 ♔f1 ♕xc4+ 13 ♔g1, moreover, in a bad version for Black, since 13...♘bd7 14 ♖c1 ♕a6 15 a4! (15...♘xf6 16 ♘b5) is usually played, but here the pawn is already at a4 (because of the slow 2...c6 and 7...c5). Therefore I did bother to examine particularly carefully 7...c5 and all its consequences.' (Bronstein)

Alas, this admission, like the incredible miracles during the resumption of the adjourned games, indicates a certain superficiality on the part of the challenger...

10 ♗e3! (a dismal choice: since 10 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 with equality is unthinkable, White is obliged to sacrifice a pawn) **10...♘xe4!**

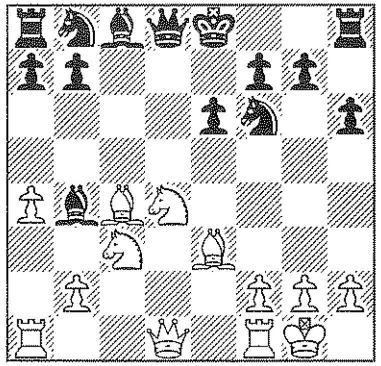
There is no point in tempting fate after 10...0-0 11 f3!

11 0-0 ♘f6

Another strong move. 'It would have been unwise to win a pawn as a result of the exchange on c3.' (Bronstein) For example: 11...♘xc3?! 12 bxc3 ♗xc3 13 ♗b5+! ♘d7 (13...♗d7 14 ♘xe6! fxe6 15 ♕h5+ ♔f8 16 ♕c5+, intending ♕xc3) 14 ♖c1 with the initiative.

11 0-0 ♘f6

The last critical position in the match.



12 ♕f3?

Capitulation! As was shown by both Keres, and Bronstein himself, White was simply obliged to play 12 ♘db5! This strong manoeuvre would have retained full compensation for the pawn and at the least forced Black to work hard:

1) 12...♕xd1? 13 ♘c7+! with a strong attack. 'But is it worth a piece? At the board I was not fully 100% sure of this and I changed my opinion only after the match, when I had to yield to the clear and precise arguments put forward by Paul Keres.' (Bronstein) The computer's arguments are even more convincing: 13...♔d8 14 ♖fxd1+ ♔xc7 15 ♘b5+ ♔c6 16 ♖ac1 ♗c5 (16...b6 17 ♗d5+) 17 ♖d6+ ♗xd6 18 ♗xe6+ with a rapid mate;

2) 12...♘bd7 13 ♘d6+ (in my opinion, 13 ♗xa7 0-0 14 ♗e3 is also quite good) 13...♗xd6?! 14 ♕xd6 'with strong pressure on the dark squares' (Bronstein), for example: 14...♘b6 15 ♗b5+ ♗d7 16 ♕g3 ♗xb5 17 ♘xb5 0-0 18 ♗xh6 etc. And if 13...♔c7 there is the amusing trick 14 ♘f5+!? exf5 (14...♔f8 15 ♘a2) 15 ♘d5+ ♘xd5 16 ♕xd5 and White at least has something to fight for;

3) 12...♘c6!? (the best move, not mentioned by the commentators: now after the exchange of queens Black succeeds in completing his development) 13 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 14 ♖fd1+ ♗d7, but even here after 15 ♘d6 ♗xd6 16 ♖xd6 ♘e5 17 ♗e2 ♔c7 18 ♖dd1 or 15 ♖ac1 ♔e7 16 ♘a2 the position is still full of life and anywhere it is possible for Black to stumble.

After missing this chance, White is no longer able to prevent the opponent from calmly completing his development.

12...0-0 13 ♖ad1 ♕e7 14 ♖fe1 (14 ♕g3 ♔h8) **14...♘c6! 15 ♕g3** (15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 ♕xc6?! ♗b7 17 ♕b5 ♖fc8 also held little joy) **15...♔h8 16 ♘xc6**

'Surrender. But what was there to do?' (Bronstein)

16...bxc6 17 ♗d4 ♖d8 18 ♖d3 (it is easy to see that 18 ♗xf6 also achieves nothing) **18...♗b7**

'Finally depriving White of his last hopes of a favourable outcome to the match. So that the following blunder is readily explicable – a collapse of emotional tension and a subconscious desire to cast off as soon as possible the burden of a match for the world championship.' (Bronstein)

19 ♖ee3? (19 ♖ed1) **19...♖xd4 20 ♖xd4 ♗c5 21 ♖d1 ♗xe3 22 ♕xe3 ½-½**

Drawn on the proposal of Botvinnik, although after 22...♕b4! 23 ♕e2 ♘d5 24 ♘e4 a5 White has no compensation for the pawn.

'Such a rapid result in the 24th game surprised many and even gave rise to all sorts of false rumours. But in such matches diverse forms of ethics exist,' writes Bronstein, and he gives similar examples from history: thus Euwe granted an 'amnesty' to Alekhine in the last game of the 1935 match, as did Karpov to Korchnoi in their 1974 match, although both held an obvious advantage at the time. The title is worth more! By concluding the match with a score of 12-12 (+5 -5 =14) Botvinnik achieved his main aim – he remained world champion.

The dramatic finishing events, in particular the end of the 23rd game, disturbed the chess world for many years to come. In an interview given in the mid-1990s the well-known chess patron Luis Rentero revealed (from an account by Bobby Fischer) the story of how the young Fischer, after losing in Mar del Plata to Spassky, burst into tears, and how Bronstein had supposedly gone up to him with the words: 'Why are you crying because of one game? They forced me to lose a match for the world championship to Botvinnik, and I didn't cry!' However, David Ionovich asserts that he never said any such thing to Fischer...

In my view, although Bronstein deserved to win from the play in this match, he somewhere lacked self-control, character – traits that had always distinguished his opponent. The challenger experienced too many sudden declines – from clean wins in 'normal time' to staggering failures during adjournment sessions. And this with seconds of the calibre of Konstantinopolsky, Boleslavsky and Furman! 'It was not I who chose them, but the "Dynamo" sports society,' recalls Bronstein. 'They turned out to be completely different people, like Krylov's swan, crab and pike. Individually they were good analysts, but together they could not even agree with what to begin the analysis! And when in the morning they showed me their variations, I invariably found mistakes...'

Losing drawn endings – such a luxury in a match for the world championship is impermissible! Botvinnik did not play so brightly, but his play was more stable and he was superior to the opponent's camp in the analysis of adjourned positions. Therefore in general the outcome of the match was right. Yes, Bronstein had the chance to punish his mighty opponent for his three-year neglect of work on chess, but Caissa decreed otherwise.

What also told, perhaps, was the difference in social status and general mood of the two players, with which we are already familiar – the champion, the 'Patriarch of Soviet chess', and the challenger, whose father was an 'enemy of the people', who had lost his health in Stalin's torture-chambers. We must not forget that in its time the Soviet Chess Federation did not include the young grandmaster (bronze prize-winner of the 1945 USSR Championship, who had defeated Botvinnik himself the previous year, and Moscow Champion 1945/46 – three points ahead of Smyslov and Kotov) either in Groningen 1946, or the Chigorin Memorial 1947, or even the 1948 Interzonal, for which only the future winner qualified from the FIDE list.

The reminiscences of Bronstein himself are rather eloquent: 'I know that Botvinnik was afraid of me. A friend of mine told me that in 1945 Botvinnik suddenly came up to him and asked: was I not ill in some way, how was my heart, were my lungs in order? Already then Botvinnik was aware of me: I beat him in the 1944 Championship, and in 1945 he escaped with a draw only with difficulty. And when I was not allowed to go somewhere, I accepted this as normal. At the time I was more concerned that my father should not be arrested again.'

Nevertheless, he got through to a match for the crown and fought with all his might, endeavouring in every game, by his own admission, to create as soon as possible a position in which there were as many 'diverse elements' as possible, and not allowing himself to be seized in the vice of standard techniques. Not without reason in an interview after the match in *Pravda* did Botvinnik say about Bronstein: 'The main strength of this young, talented grandmaster is that he plays well in the transition from opening to middlegame.'

I think that at that time he also had no equals in the psychology of the chess struggle. Botvinnik, who was accustomed to playing with the titans of the classical trend, putting into effect logically regulated plans, felt very uncomfortable in the match with Bronstein, since often he did not understand what his opponent wanted. The latter maintained the tension, making seemingly planless moves, and this unnerved the champion. Hence, in all probability, the nervy, 'ragged' character of the match. Bronstein was all the time relying on psychology, thinking how he could throw Botvinnik off his stride. In other competitions too he always played against the specific opponent, seeking his weak and vulnerable points. This unusual combination of psychology and chess brilliance distinguishes Bronstein from all the other players of that time. But the competitive element in him was weaker, and at decisive moments he lacked something. The shadow of the 23rd game stayed with him for many long years...

Botvinnik commented with satisfaction that 'the match struck Bronstein both a chess blow and a psychological blow: never again was he able to repeat his success.' But, objectively speaking, that was not an easy task: although David Ionovich continued to play very strongly and brilliantly (especially in the 1955 Interzonal), in the Candidates tournaments of those years it was Smyslov who shone. And later, as I have already described, Bronstein failed to qualify for the Candidates series on account of the notorious 'Botvinnik rule' – a limit on the number of participants from one country.

After the 1951 match Botvinnik admitted that he had almost lost his former superiority over the rest and that now he was merely 'the first among equals'. He realised that he risked being hopelessly left behind, and he became active in the chess scene: he played in two successive USSR Championships and in a major international tournament in Budapest, he prepared for the 1952 Olympiad (but – an unprecedented occurrence! – he was excluded from the team 'because of poor form'), and he won an additional match for the title of USSR Champion against Taimanov.

The next match for the world championship, with Vasily Smyslov (Moscow 1954) again ended in a 12-12 draw. But on this occasion Botvinnik played far more confidently and there was not the same danger of defeat as in 1951 – one only has to mention his score of 3½ out of 4 at the start and, after something of a slump, 4 out of 5 in the middle of the match!

However, the storm-clouds were gathering over the throne, and in 1956, soon after Smyslov's second victory in the Candidates tournament, an event occurred that was to have a strong influence on the entire modern history of chess: *FIDE granted the world champion the right to a return match.* This decision was adopted together with the aforementioned 'Botvinnik rule', and also not without the participation of Mikhail Moiseevich (I should remind you that his friend Ragozin was a FIDE Vice-President). Although earlier, in the late 1940s, in his plan for the contesting of the world championship, he had rejected the idea of the return match, since 'its organisation would disturb the periodicity of the system, and in the interests of chess this must not be allowed,' and he had gained the right for a defeated champion to play a match-tournament with the champion and the challenger three years later (this FIDE rule operated in the 1951 and 1954 matches).

In 1957 Botvinnik lost to Smyslov, but with the help of the return match he overthrew him within a year. In 1960-61 the same happened with Tal. Then FIDE abolished return matches. True, a decade and a half later they were reinstated for Karpov, to help him in his battle against the 'villain' Korchnoi...

At any event, the sixth world champion showed himself to be virtually the greatest match player in the entire history of chess. After all, in the early 1950s the game was developing in complexity at a furious pace – this was the era of serious qualitative changes, and the new generations were setting Botvinnik problems that he had previously not encountered. He now had to play an 'alien' form of chess. Nevertheless, thanks to his enormous talent, will-power and capacity for work, he was able to adapt, acquire his own place in this renovated game and, while retaining his style, give an adequate reply to the challenges of the times.

Prescriptions of Doctor Botvinnik

As is apparent from the preceding chapters, both of Botvinnik's immediate predecessors – Alekhine and Euwe – had already tried to build up their opening repertoire in close connection with plans in the middlegame. But in the 1930s-1940s Botvinnik was the first to develop a deeply thought-out system of opening preparation, aimed at drawing the opponents into thoroughly analysed positions. Here his intuition and accurate knowledge of numerous nuances usually gave him a marked advantage. This method was even more effective when playing Black: Botvinnik's iron logic and sharp opening schemes, unusual for those times, threw his opponents into disarray. After all, it was not usual to risk too much with White in those days, and few understood how to counter such sharp play by Black aimed at seizing the initiative.

This was essentially an innovative, scientific approach to the opening, based on an attempt to disclose all the tactical and strategic possibilities of the position. No one before Botvinnik had been able so carefully to trace the evolution of chess thinking, observe all that was new, valuable and interesting, and focus his attention and analytical mastery on this. The reward for the sixth champion was the greatest number of 'opening victories' (games where the outcome was already decided in the opening) among his contemporaries.

I will concentrate on a number of popular opening schemes and their associated plans that are inseparably linked with the name of Botvinnik.

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+

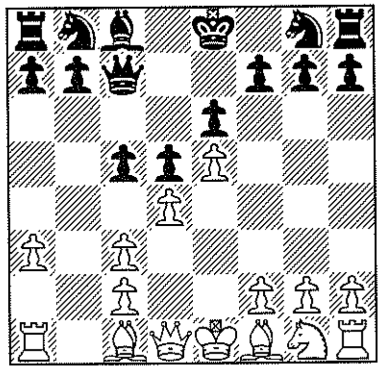
Against Reshevsky (USSR-USA, 1946), Unzicker (Amsterdam 1954) and in three games from his first match with Smyslov (Moscow 1954) Mikhail Moiseevich also tried 5...♗a5 (*Game No.105*).

6 bxc3

Lovers of the two bishops happily went in for this variation, hoping to exploit the weakening of the dark squares.

6...♕c7

From the early 1930s and up to the 1948 match-tournament Botvinnik played 6...♘e7 exclusively, scoring almost 80% and, in particular, twice defeating Smyslov – in the match-tournament for the title of Absolute USSR Champion (1941) and in the 13th USSR Championship (1944).



7 ♕g4!?

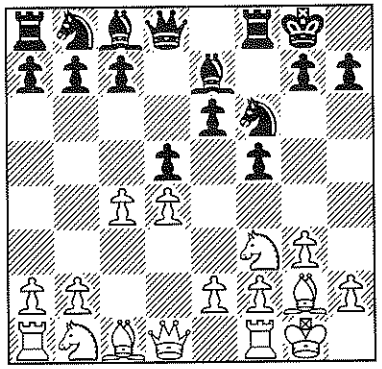
Antoshin (22nd USSR Championship, Moscow 1955), Unzicker (Oberhausen 1961) and Robatsch (Hastings 1961/62) preferred the quieter 7 ♘f3.

7...f5 8 ♕g3 ♘e7!? (much sharper than 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♘e7 10 ♗d2 0-0 Reshevsky-Botvinnik, The Hague/Moscow 1948) **9 ♕xg7!** (a more modest alternative is 9 ♗d2 0-0 Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow 14th matchgame 1957) **9...♖g8 10 ♕xh7 cxd4** with great complications, as in the two matches with Tal (*Game No.127*).

Dutch Defence – 'Stonewall' System

1 d4 e6 (a courteous invitation to the French!) **2 c4 f5 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♗g2 ♗e7 5 ♘f3 d5 6 0-0 0-0**

According to the classical rules, the yawning hole at e5 makes Black's position unattractive, but Botvinnik regularly succeeded in neutralising White's positional pluses and creating an attack on the kingside.



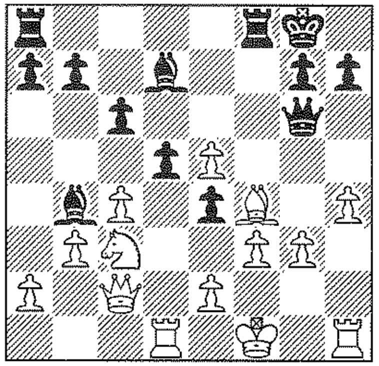
7 ♘c3

The alternative is 7 b3 (7 ♘bd2!?) 7...c6 8 ♗a3 ♘bd7!? (or 8...b6 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♘e5 ♗b7 11 ♘d2 ♘bd7 12 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 13 e3 ♖ac8 14 ♖c1 c5 15 ♕e2 ♘f6 16 cxd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♘f3 ♖c7 19 ♖c2 ♖fc8 20 ♖fc1 ♘e4 21 ♘e5 with a slight advantage, Botvinnik-Bronstein, Moscow 7th matchgame 1951) 9 ♕c1 ♘e4 10 ♘bd2 ♗xa3 11 ♕xa3 b6 12 ♖ac1 ♗b7 13 ♖fd1 ♕f6 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♘e1 (Szabo-Botvinnik, Budapest 1952), and here 15...♘xd2 16 ♖xd2 f4! was good.

7...c6

In this position various continuations have been tried:

1) **8 ♕c2** (8 ♗g5!? ♘bd7 9 e3 Botvinnik-Smyslov, Moscow 22nd matchgame 1958) **8...♕e8** (8...♘e4!?) **9 ♗f4** (9 ♗g5!?) **9...♕h5 10 ♖ad1 ♘bd7 11 b3** (11 ♘e5 ♘xe5 12 ♗xe5 ♘g4) **11...♘e4** (11...♔h8!? 12 ♔h1 ♖g8 13 e3 g5 14 ♗c7 ♘e8 15 ♗e5+ ♘xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘f6 17 f3 ♗d6 18 e4 ♘d7 19 g4 ♕e8 20 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 21 e5 ♗b4 22 gxf5 exf5 23 cxd5 ♗xc3 24 dxc6 ♗xc6 25 ♕xc3 ♕e6 with sharp play, Yudovich-Botvinnik, Leningrad 1934) **12 ♘e5! ♘g5** (12...♗f6!?; 12...♘d6!?) **13 h4?!** (13 f3!) **13...♘e4 14 ♗f3** (14 ♘xe4!? fxe4 15 f3) **14...♕e8 15 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 16 ♔g2 ♗b4! 17 ♗xe4?!** (17 ♘b1!?) **17...fxe4 18 ♖h1 ♕h5 19 f3 ♕g6** (19...e5! 20 dxe5 ♕g6 is more accurate) **20 ♔f1 e5 21 dxe5?** (21 h5!?)



21...♖xf4! 22 gxf4 ♕g3!! 23 ♘xe4 (23 cxd5 ♗c5! with mate) **23...dxe4 24 ♖xd7** (24 ♕xe4 ♗c5 25 e3 ♗f5!) **24...♗c5** (but not 24...e3?? 25 ♖xg7+!) **25 e3 ♕xf3+ 26 ♕f2 ♕xh1+** and Black won (I.Rabinovich-Botvinnik, 5th USSR Championship, Moscow 1927);

2) **8 b3 ♕e8 9 ♗b2 ♘bd7 10 ♕d3?!** (10 ♕e1; 10 e3 ♘e4 with equality) **10...♕h5 11 cxd5 exd5 12 ♘d2?! ♘e4 13 f3 ♘xc3 14 ♗xc3 f4! 15 ♖fe1 ♗d6 16 ♘f1 ♖f7 17 e3 fxg3 18 ♘xg3 ♕h4 19 ♘f1 ♘f6 20 ♖e2 ♗d7 21 ♗e1 ♕g5 22 ♗g3 ♗xg3 23 ♘xg3 h5! 24 f4 ♕g4 25 ♖f2 h4** with decisive threats (Flohr-Botvinnik, Leningrad 10th matchgame 1933);

3) **8 ♖b1** (8 ♕b3 ♔h8 9 ♘e5 ♘bd7 10 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 11 ♖d1 ♘b6 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♘a4 ♘c4 with equality, Capablanca-Botvinnik, Moscow 1936) **8...♔h8** (8...♕e8 9 c5 ♕h5 10 b4 ♘e4 11 ♕c2 ♘d7 12 b5 ♗f6 13 ♗f4 ♕e8 14 ♗c7 ♖f7 15 ♗a5 e5 is unclear, Reshevsky-Botvinnik, Nottingham 1936) **9 cxd5 cxd5 10 ♗f4** (10 ♘e5!?) **10...♘c6 11 ♘e5 ♗d7 12 ♖c1 ♖c8 13 ♕d3 ♘h5 14 ♗d2 ♗d6 15 ♘xc6** (15 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 16 f4 is more solid) **15...♗xc6 16 ♕f3 ♕e8!** and Black won in the end (*Game No.40*).

Slav Defence – Botvinnik Variation

This is a veritable pearl among the opening finds of the sixth champion. As an example I give his famous win over Denker.

Game 68

A.Denker-M.Botvinnik

Radio Match USSR – USA 1945

Slav Defence D44

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5

After 5 e3 Botvinnik successfully employed not only the Meran 5...♘bd7 6 ♗d3 dxc4, but also the dubious move 6...♗e7, having 'thoroughly' studied the variation 7 b3 0-0 8 0-0 b6 9 ♗b2 ♗b7 10 ♕e2 c5 (Uhlmann-Botvinnik, Hastings 1966/67). His game with Petrosian (Moscow 1967) went 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♗xc4 b5 9 ♗d3 b4 10 ♘e4 ♘xe4 11 ♗xe4 ♗b7 12 b3 (12 ♕c2!) 12...0-0 13 ♗b2 ♘f6 14 ♗d3 c5 15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♕e2 ♕e7 17 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 18 e4 ♗b6 19 ♘e5 ♘d7 with a quick draw.

During analysis after the game Tigran Vartanovich sighed: 'Perhaps I was wrong not to play 7 b3...' Mikhail Moiseevich looked at him coldly and divulged: 'You were very lucky!' (I was informed of this amusing episode by Spassky.)

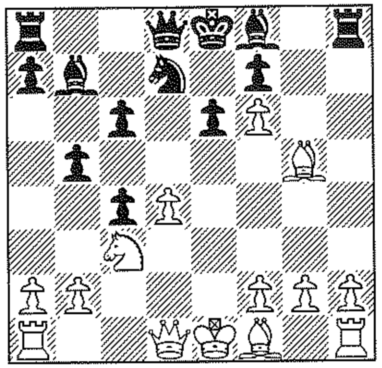
5...dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5

Or 9 exf6 gxh4 10 ♘e5 ♕xf6 11 g3 ♘d7 12 ♕e2 ♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♕e7 14 ♗g2 ♗b7 15 0-0-0 ♗g7 16 f4 0-0 17 ♖d6 ♖ad8 18 ♖hd1 ♖xd6 19 exd6 ♕d8 20 ♘e4 ♕a5! with good play for Black, who won in a fierce struggle (Bronstein-Botvinnik, 19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951).

9...hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6

In the 13th USSR Championship (Moscow 1944) Lilienthal and Mikenas played 11 g3 against Botvinnik, and both lost.

11...♗b7

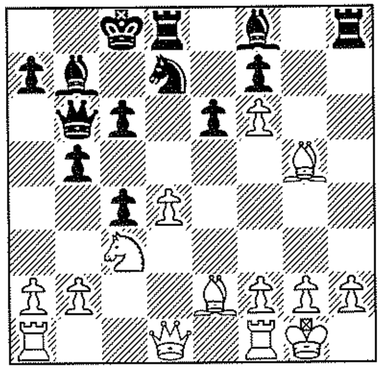


12 ♗e2?

'12 g3! should be played without thinking!' any master would say half a century later. In this case 12...♕b6 13 ♗g2 0-0-0 14 0-0 ♘e5?! (Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow 5th matchgame 1954) 15 dxe5! ♖xd1 16 ♖axd1 favours White, and the main discussions revolve around 12...c5! 13 d5!

12...♕b6 13 0-0 0-0-0

Both kings have castled, but the white monarch will feel less comfortable, especially after the inevitable ...c6-c5



14 a4?!

This looks logical, but it soon transpires that White is too slow in creating any real threats to the enemy king. In a training game with Botvinnik (Pushkin 1941), his friend, sparring-partner and trainer for many years, Ragozin, chose the optimistic 14 h4?! and after 14...♗h6! 15 a4 ♗xg5 16 hxg5 b4 17 ♘e4 c5 he did not last long.

It was not too late for 14 ♗f3, defending the critical diagonal and partially repairing the damage caused by his 12th move (the bishop at g2 with the pawn at g3 is a far more healthy construction). Then 14...♘e5 would have led to a double-edged position after the queen sacrifice 15 dxe5 ♖xd1 16 ♖fxd1.

14...b4 15 ♘e4 c5 16 ♕b1?

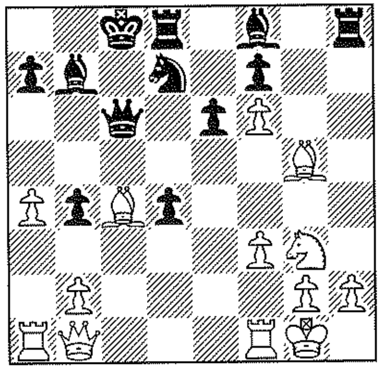
Too far away from the main battlefield. If 16 ♕c2 Black has the very attractive 16...c3!? (this is more energetic than 16...b3 17 ♕b1 ♕c7) 17 bxc3 ♕c7, for example: 18 f4 cxd4 19 c4 d3! 20 ♗xd3 ♘c5 21 ♘xc5 ♗xc5+ 22 ♔h1 ♖dg8 (threatening 23...♖xg5) 23 ♗h7 (what else?) 23...b3! 24 ♕b1 (24 ♕d3 ♖d8) 24...♕c6! 25 ♖f3 ♕xf3!, and the rampant bishops trample on the white king (26 gxf3 ♗xf3 mate!).

But 16 ♘d2 was more sensible, with hopes of holding the position after 16...c3 17 bxc3 bxc3 18 ♘c4 ♕c7 19 h4.

16...♕c7 (by attacking the h2-pawn, Black gains a tempo for his queen manoeuvre) **17 ♘g3?**

The final mistake: the knight should have remained at e4. 17 h4 ♗h6! would also not have stopped Black's attack, but 17 g3 would have delayed disaster.

17...cxd4 18 ♗xc4 ♕c6 19 f3



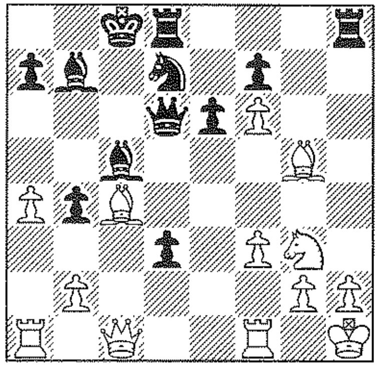
19...d3!

Amazing harmony: the black pieces exploit all the open files and diagonals, in order to satisfy their 'basic instinct' – to get at the white king!

20 ♕c1

20 ♘e4 ♕c7! (again) 21 g3 ♗xe4 22 fxe4 ♕xc4 23 ♖c1 ♗c5+ was very bad for White. 20 ♗e3 ♗c5 21 ♕c1 d2! 22 ♕xd2 ♘e5 was an alternative. 20 ♔h1 seems slightly more tenacious, but here a fine combination is possible: 20...♕c7 21 f4 ♕c6 22 ♖g1 ♗c5 23 ♗xd3 ♗f2! with numerous threats such as ...♖xh2 (if 24 ♖c1 there follows the reply 24...♘c5).

20...♗c5+ 21 ♔h1 ♕d6!



22 ♕f4

The white king would have had to complete an undesirable walk after 22 ♗f4 ♖xh2+ 23 ♔xh2 ♖h8+ 24 ♘h5 ♖xh5+ 25 ♔g3 e5 (or simply 25...♕d4!, as the computer suggests) 26 ♗g5 (26 ♗e3 e4+ 27 f4 ♕xf6) 26...e4+ 27 ♔g4 ♘xf6+! 28 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 29 ♗e6+ ♔d8! 30 ♔xh5 ♕g6+ 31 ♔h4 ♗e7+ 32 ♔h3 ♕h5+ 33 ♔g3 ♕h4 mate!

22...♖xh2+ 23 ♔xh2 ♖h8+ 24 ♕h4 ♖xh4+ 25 ♗xh4 ♕f4 0-1

Botvinnik employed his variation with stunning effect! This is not surprising, since its idea is very cunning: Black goes in for a suspicious, semi-broken position, but concealed in it is great dynamic potential, with good chances of counterplay in the centre and an attack on the kingside using the open lines.

Incidentally, no one caught Botvinnik in his own complicated invention, and even half a century later we professionals are still studying these incomprehensible dark spots, left by him on the map of opening theory. Modern analyses reach almost as far as move 40, and from time to time White discovers certain holes in this ultra-risky variation. But, while ruinous for Botvinnik's contemporaries, even today it is a long way from being finally refuted...

Patent Advance of the g-Pawn

Since distant times it was thought that an attack on the kingside with g2-g4 was possible only after 1 e4 – for example, in the Sicilian Defence. However, Botvinnik showed that this idea is also good in the closed games – the Queen's Gambit, the Nimzo-Indian Defence and so on. And indeed, in order to seize space, why not create a threat to the f6-knight – a key piece, controlling the central squares and defending the king.

Game 69
M.Botvinnik-V.Alatortsev
Leningrad Championship 1934
Queen's Gambit Declined D55

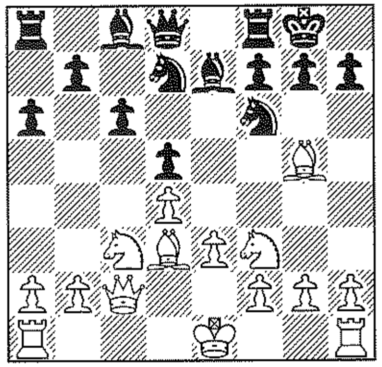
1 d4 e6 2 c4 d5 3 ♘f3 ♗e7 (following the example of the Alekhine-Lasker game, New York 1924) **4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5 0-0 6 e3 a6**

For the moment an unnecessary move. The usual 6...h6 or 6...♘bd7 is better.

7 cxd5 exd5 (7...♘xd5!?) **8 ♗d3 c6?!** (8...♘bd7 with the idea of ...♖e8 and ...♘f8 is more solid) **9 ♕c2 ♘bd7**

White was already threatening 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 ♗xh7+.

A typical position from the Carlsbad Variation has arisen, but with the 'superfluous' move 6...a6. Alatortsev did not regard it as a loss of time, since the theory of the 1930s recommended only one viable plan for White – kingside castling and the so-called minority attack on the queenside: b2-b4, a2-a4 and b4-b5 with the intention of creating a weakness at c6 or isolating the d5-pawn. But Botvinnik looked at it differently:



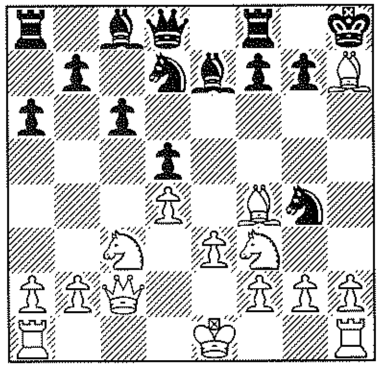
10 g4!

A blow of fearful strength! In view of the threat of 11 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 12 g5 Black is forced to weaken his king's defences.

10...♘xg4?

Alatortsev could not cope with the unexpected change of scene. 'In the event of 10...h6 11 ♗f4 White is threatening 12 g5 with the opening of the g-file (11...♘xg4? 12 ♖g1). The only defence against the lightning attack was 10...g6, although this too is a weakening, which could have told.' (Botvinnik)

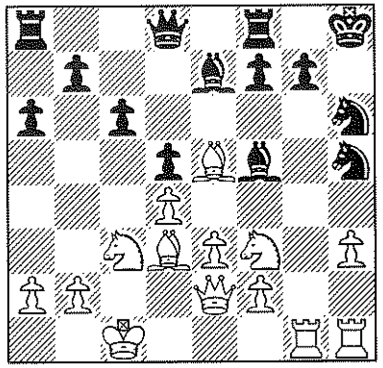
11 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 12 ♗f4!



12...♘df6

After 12...g6 13 ♗xg6 fxg6 14 ♕xg6 White's threats are irresistible: 14...♘gf6 (14...♘df6 15 h3, while Fritz gives the winning variation 14...♖xf4 15 exf4 ♘f8 16 ♕h5+ ♘h7 17 ♖g1 ♘gf6 18 ♘e5) 15 ♘g5 ♕e8 16 ♕h6+ ♔g8 17 ♖g1.

13 ♗d3 ♘h5 (the strange knight manoeuvres merely accelerate Black's inevitable demise) **14 h3 ♘gf6 15 ♗e5 ♘g8 16 0-0-0 ♘h6 17 ♖dg1** (White's attack develops simply and naturally) **17...♗e6 18 ♕e2 ♗f5?** (an oversight, but 18...♘f6 19 ♘g5 was also dismal)



19 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 20 ♘h4! 1-0

The next march of the knight's pawn was revealed to the world 20 years later in a match for the title.

Game 70
M.Botvinnik-V.Smyslov
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1954, 2nd game
Nimzo-Indian Defence E45

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 b6 (4...d5; 4...0-0; 4...c5) **5 ♘e2 ♗a6!? 6 a3 ♗e7**

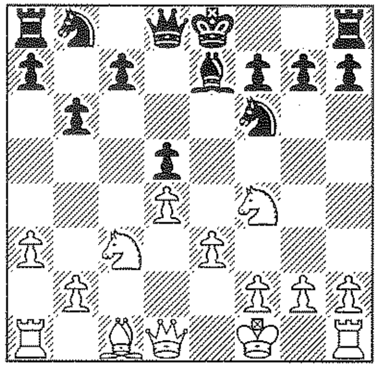
In three games from the next match (Moscow 1957) Vasily Vasilievich played only 6...♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 d5 8 b3 0-0.

7 ♘f4!

It is harmless to play 7 ♘g3 d5 8 cxd5 ♗xf1 9 ♘xf1 exd5 10 ♘g3 ♕d7! 11 ♕f3 ♘c6 12 0-0 g6 13 ♗d2 0-0 14 ♘ce2 h5 with equality (Botvinnik-Bronstein, Moscow 17th matchgame 1951).

7...d5 8 cxd5!? ♗xf1 9 ♔xf1 exd5

Black appears to be alright. What compensation does White have for the loss of castling?



10 g4!

At the most appropriate moment! By driving the knight from f6, the pawn spreads confusion in the black ranks. 'An improvement, found in the quiet of my study. After 10 ♕f3 c6 11 g4 0-0 Black has a good position (Shainswit-Fine, New York 1951). Now, however, he is unable to castle in time, since White does not lose a tempo on ♕f3.' (Botvinnik)

10...c6?!

If 10...h6?!, then 11 ♕f3 c6 12 h4! and g4-g5 is now effective. It was preferable to play 10...g5 11 ♘h5 (11 ♘d3 h5 12 gxh5 ♖xh5 with equality) 11...♘xh5 12 gxh5 c6 13 ♕f3 ♘a6 (or 13...♖f8!? 14 e4 dxe4 15 ♕xe4 f5) 14 e4 ♘c7 – in a dozen games, played on this theme, White was not often able to retain the initiative (Taimanov recommends 15 ♖g1 h6 16 h4 gxh4 17 ♗f4).

11 g5 ♘fd7 (after 11...♘e4 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 h4 followed by ♘h5 and ♕g4 the e4-pawn is very vulnerable) **12 h4 ♗d6?**

A mistake, increasing the effect of White's main idea – the opening of the centre. '12...0-0 really was better, although after 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘c5 15 ♘xc5 bxc5 16 ♗e3 White's advantage is undisputed.' (Botvinnik) It would appear that the preparatory 13 ♕g4! is even more dangerous – I will give a variation which, though not forced, is attractive: 13...♘a6 14 e4! dxe4 15 ♘xe4 f5 16 gxf6 ♘xf6 17 ♕e6+ ♔h8 18 h5! ♘xe4 19 ♘g6+ hxg6 20 hxg6+ ♗h4 21 ♕xe4 ♖xf2+ 22 ♔g1 ♔g8 23 ♖xh4 ♕f6 24 ♖f4! (the tempting 24 ♗g5? even loses: 24...♕xg5+ 25 ♔xf2 ♖f8+ 26 ♔e1 ♕g1+ or 26 ♔e2 ♕b5+ 27 ♔e3 ♕b3+) 24...♖xf4 25 ♗xf4 ♖f8 26 ♗g3 ♘b8 27 d5! with a big advantage.

13 e4! dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♗xf4 15 ♗xf4 0-0 16 h5! (combining pressure in the centre with threats to the enemy king) **16...♖e8**

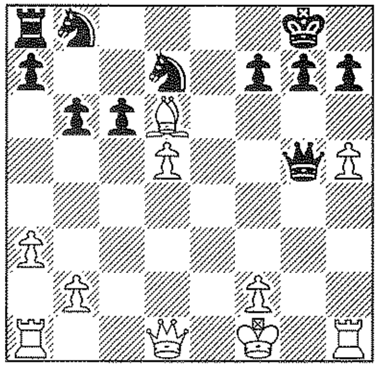
After 16...♘a6 17 h6! g6 (17...♖e8 18 hxg7 ♖xe4 19 ♕h5 ♔xg7 20 ♕xh7+ etc.) 18 ♕a4 ♘ab8 19 ♖e1 Black is practically paralysed, and 16...♕e7 17 ♕f3 ♕e6 18 h6 g6 19 ♘d6 is no better.

17 ♘d6 ♖e6 (17...♘f8!?) **18 d5!** (the decisive breakthrough) **18...♖xd6**

A desperate exchange sacrifice. After 18...cxd5 19 ♕xd5 ♘a6 White can play both 20 ♘xf7!? ♔xf7 21 g6+ hxg6 22 hxg6+ ♔e7 23 ♗d6+ and 20 g6 ♘c7 (20...♘f8 21 gxf7+ ♔h8 22 h6 ♘c7 23 ♘f5!) 21 gxh7+! ♔xh7 22 ♕f5+ with crushing threats.

19 ♗xd6 ♕xg5

Black has a pawn for the exchange, and another pawn is under attack...



20 ♕f3! (the finishing touch: the artless 20 dxc6 ♘xc6 would have left the opponent with hopes of saving the game, and so White intensifies the pressure) **20...♕xd5**

Black's sufferings would not have been eased by 20...cxd5 21 ♖g1, for example: 21...♕h4 22 ♖g4 ♕d8 23 ♖c1 or 21...♕d2 22 ♗b4 ♕xb2 23 ♖e1 ♘a6 24 ♕xd5 etc.

21 ♕xd5 cxd5 22 ♖c1 ♘a6 23 b4! (the end for the unfortunate knight) **23...h6 24 ♖h3 ♔h7 25 ♖d3 ♘f6 26 b5 ♘c5 27 ♗xc5 bxc5 28 ♖xc5 ♖b8 29 a4 ♖b7 30 ♖dc3 1-0**

If 30...♘e4 31 ♖c7 with the inevitable exchange of rooks and a4-a5

In Botvinnik's last match the audacious g-pawn suddenly attacked a bishop on f5.

Game 71
M.Botvinnik-T.Petrosian
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1963, 14th game
Queen's Gambit Declined D31

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗e7

In this way Black avoids the classical Carlsbad Variation – 3...♘f6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗g5, where the g1-knight may be developed not only at f3, but also at e2 (*Game No.43*). On the other hand, apart from the usual 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5 or 5 ♗f4, White now has an additional plan:

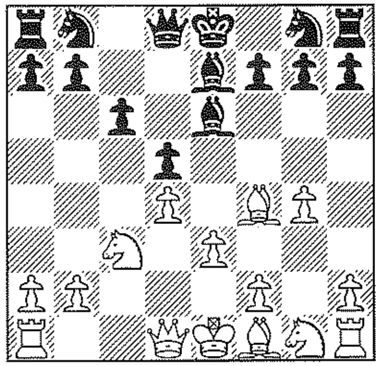
4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4 c6 6 e3 ♗f5

It was because of this reply that the exchange on d5 was not considered dangerous for Black. '6...♘f6 7 ♗d3 leads to the Carlsbad Variation with the bishop at f4 instead of g5, which is to White's advantage.' (Botvinnik)

7 g4! (disrupting the opponent's plan) **7...♗e6**

If 7...♗g6, then 8 h4!, and 8...♗xh4? is not possible on account of 9 ♕b3 b6 10 ♘f3 (given by Botvinnik; the 'silicon friend' suggests the more radical 10 ♖xh4! ♕xh4 11 ♘xd5) 10...♗f6 11 g5 ♗e7 12 ♗xb8! ♖xb8 13 ♘e5 with crushing threats, for example: 13...♖c8 14 ♘xc6! ♖xc6 15 ♗b5 ♕d6 16 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♔d7 18 ♖c1.

8...h5 is better (but not 8...h6?! 9 ♘f3 ♘d7 10 h5 ♗h7 11 ♗d3), although after 9 g5 White's spatial advantage promises him the initiative 'for free': 9...♗d6 (9...♗b4!?) 10 ♘ge2 ♘a6 11 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 12 ♘f4 ♘c7 13 ♗e2 ♕b4 14 ♕d2 ♘e7 15 ♗f3 ♘e6 16 ♘ce2! etc. (Karpov-Portisch, Linares 1989).



8 h3

A step forward compared with 8 ♗d3 (12th game of the match). But 8 h4!? is even more energetic (Botvinnik-Spassky, Leiden 1970), since, as was discovered by Mikhail Moiseevich, here too it is extremely dangerous to play 8...♗xh4?! 9 ♕b3, for example: 9...b6 (9...♗c8 10 e4) 10 ♘f3 ♗e7 11 ♘e5! (11 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 12 ♘e5 ♖c8! 13 ♕a4 b5 14 ♕xa7 ♗d6 is not so clear) 11...♘f6 12 ♗e2 ♕c8 13 ♖c1 ♕b7 14 g5 etc. Also to White's advantage is 9...g5 10 ♗h2 ♕b6 (10...♗xg4? 11 ♕xb7 and wins, Vaiser-Diaz, Havana 1985) 11 ♘f3 ♕xb3 12 axb3 ♗xg4 13 ♘xh4 gxh4 14 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 15 ♖xa7.

The aforementioned game with Spassky went 8...♘d7 9 h5 ♕b6 10 ♖b1 ♘gf6 11 f3 h6 12 ♗d3 ♕a5 13 ♘ge2 b5 14 ♘c1! ♕d8 15 ♘b3 with advantage to White. Later games confirmed this evaluation: 12...c5 (12...0-0 13 g5!?) 13 ♘ge2 ♖c8 14 ♔f1 0-0 15 g5! hxg5 16 ♗xg5 ♖fe8 17 ♕e1 (Knaak-Geller, Moscow 1982) or 11...0-0 (instead of 11...h6) 12 ♗d3 c5 13 ♘ge2 ♖ac8 14 ♔f1 cxd4 15 exd4 ♗d6 16 ♕d2 ♘e8 17 ♔g2 ♕d8 18 ♖be1 (Beliavsky-Geller, 50th USSR Championship, Moscow 1983).

Perhaps the most interesting possibility is 9...♘h6!? (instead of 9...♕b6), although in the game Kasparov-Karpov (Moscow 21st matchgame 1985) he was not able to demonstrate all the virtues of this idea: 10 ♗e2 (10 f3 f5!; 10 ♗h3 g5!) 10...♘b6 11 ♖c1 ♗d6?! (11...♘c4 is more critical) 12 ♘h3 ♗xf4 13 ♘xf4 ♗d7 14 ♖g1! g5 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♔d2! ♕e7 17 b3! g5 18 ♘d3 0-0-0 19 ♖h1 f6 20 ♕g1 ♘f7 21 ♕g3 with enduring pressure.

8...♘f6

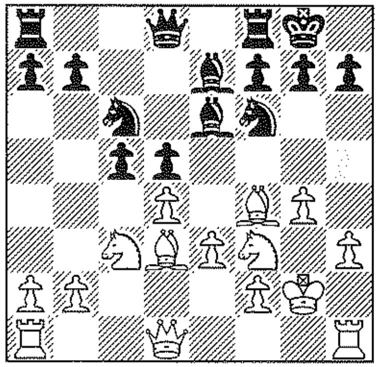
After 8...♗d6 9 ♘ge2 ♘e7 10 ♕b3 White's position is the more active (Korchnoi-Spassky, Kiev 2nd matchgame 1968).

9 ♗d3

In the 18th game Botvinnik gained the advantage after 9 ♘f3 ♘bd7 (9...c5?! 10 ♕b3 or 10 ♗b5+) 10 ♗d3 ♘b6 11 ♕c2, but 9...0-0 is better, with the intention of 10...c5 and ...♘b8-c6.

9...c5 10 ♘f3 ♘c6 11 ♔f1! (the rook may come in useful at h1) **11...0-0 12 ♔g2**

The culmination of the opening duel. White's achievements appear modest, but in modern chess even the simple restriction of the opponent's counterplay is not unimportant.



12...cxd4

'Now White is able to defend his outpost in the centre, and for this reason Romanovsky recommended 12...♖e8 and ...♘f6-d7-f8.' (Botvinnik) In the game Korchnoi-Karpov (Merano 13th matchgame 1981) Black opted to maintain the tension by 12...♖c8 13 ♖c1 ♖e8, but after 14 dxc5! ♗xc5 15 ♘b5 ♗f8 16 ♘fd4 he too got into difficulties and suffered a memorable defeat.

13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4

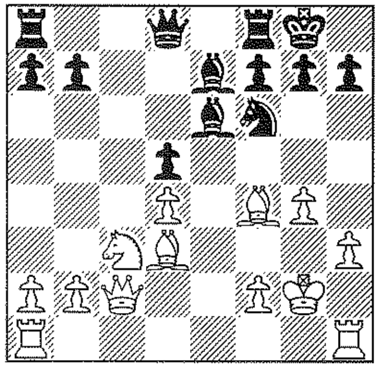
13...♗d6 14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 ♘ce2 ♖fe8 16 ♖c1 ♗d7 17 ♗b1! favours White (Geller-Spassky, Moscow 1967).

14 exd4 ♘d7

Black is condemned to passive defence. 14...♘e4 is insufficient in view of 15 ♘xe4 dxe4 16 ♗xe4 f5 17 gxf5 ♗xf5 18 ♕d3.

15 ♕c2 ♘f6

'Typical of Petrosian. He is afraid of weakening his position by either ...h7-h6 or ...g7-g6, and so he is not concerned about losing two tempi, if he considers the move to be the most sensible in the given situation.' (Botvinnik) And indeed, Black could not have been inspired by either 15...h6 16 ♕d2 with the threat of ♗c2 and ♕d3, or 15...g6 16 ♗h6 ♖e8 17 f4.



16 f3! (but not 16 g5?! ♘h5 17 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 with counterplay) **16...♖c8 17 ♗e5 ♗d6 18 ♖ae1! ♗xe5 19 ♖xe5 g6 20 ♕f2 ♘d7 21 ♖e2 ♘b6 22 ♖he1 ♘c4 23 ♗xc4 ♖xc4**

23...dxc4 would have led after 24 d5 to the loss of a pawn.

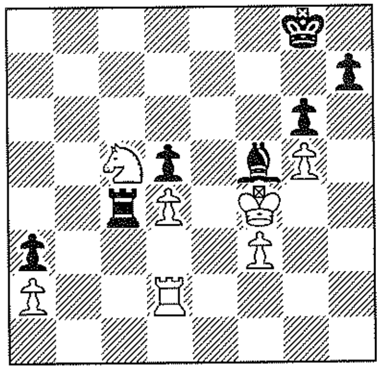
24 ♖d2 ♖e8 25 ♖e3 a6 26 b3 ♖c6 27 ♘a4 b6 28 ♘b2 a5 29 ♘d3 f6 30 h4!

'White prepares g4-g5, to weaken the dark squares in the opponent's position.' (Botvinnik)

30...♗f7 31 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 32 ♕e3 ♗f7 33 g5 ♗e6 34 ♘f4 ♗f7 (if 34...♗f5, then 35 gxf6 ♖xf6 36 ♕e5 ♖d6 37 ♖e2 etc.) **35 ♘d3 ♗e6 36 gxf6 ♕xf6 37 ♕g5 ♕xg5+?!**

37...♔g7 (37...♕xd4? 38 ♘e5) 38 ♘f4 ♔f7 is more tenacious, although after 39 ♔g3 Black's position is unenviable.

38 hxg5 a4 39 bxa4 ♖c4 40 a5 bxa5 41 ♘c5 ♗f5 42 ♔g3! a4 43 ♔f4 a3



44 ♔e5 (the logical completion of the plan with 30 h4 and 33 g5) **44...♖b4 45 ♘d3! ♖b5 46 ♔d6 ♔f7 47 ♔c6 ♗xd3**

If 47...♖a5, then 48 ♘c5!

48 ♖xd3 ♖b2 49 ♖xa3 ♖g2 50 ♔xd5 ♖xg5+ 51 ♔c6 h5 52 d5 ♖g2 53 d6 ♖c2+ 54 ♔d7 h4

'54...g5 55 ♖a5 ♔f6 56 ♔d8 h4 57 d7 h3 was better, although after 58 ♖a6+ ♔g7 59 ♖e6 h2 60 ♖e1 ♔f7 61 a4 White should still win.' (Botvinnik). Here 59 ♔e7! is simpler.

55 f4 ♖f2 56 ♔c8 ♖xf4 57 ♖a7+ 1-0

The d-pawn promotes.

Under the influence of Botvinnik's games, the sharp g2-g4 thrust, which at one time was unusual in the closed games, has nowadays become a typical way of fighting for the initiative. For example: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 c6 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♕c2 ♗d6 7 g4!? (Slav Defence), 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 e6 4 e3 f5 5 g4!? (Dutch Defence) or 1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 ♗b4 4 g4!? (English Opening).

Enmeshed in the Caro-Kann

When Botvinnik's favourite French Defence began to malfunction and he found he had difficulties in the Ruy Lopez and the Sicilian Defence, he looked for another solution to the problem of 1 e4. In three matches for the world championship – 1958, 1960 and 1961 – his main opening with Black was the fireproof Caro-Kann Defence, Capablanca's favourite weapon (*Volume 1, Game No.103*).

With this defence, which he employed in 20 games, he was on the whole successful in curbing the aggressive aspirations of both Smyslov and Tal (Black's isolated defeats were more often associated not with the opening, but with mistakes in the later play). And it all began with the following surprise.

Game 72

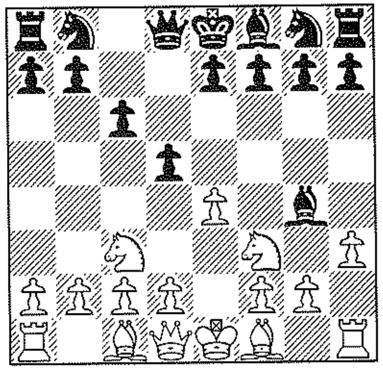
V.Smyslov-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Return Match,
Moscow 1958, 1st game
Caro-Kann Defence B11

1 e4 c6!?

A 'novelty', for which the new world champion proved to be not fully prepared – to judge both by his avoidance of 2 d4, and by the further course of events.

2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♘f3 ♗g4! (3...dxe4?! – *Game No.136*) **4 h3**



4...♗xf3

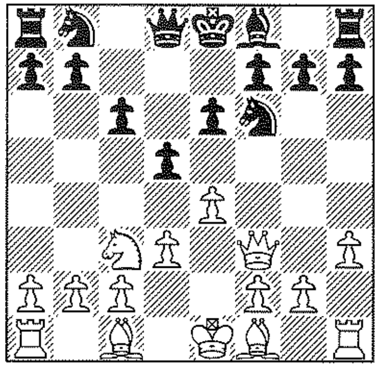
A sharper alternative is 4...♗h5 5 exd5 cxd5 6 ♗b5+ ♘c6 7 g4 ♗g6 8 ♘e5 ♖c8 9 d4 e6 (Fischer-Smyslov, Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade Candidates 1959).

5 ♕xf3

Perhaps too eccentric is 5 gxf3?! e6 6 d4 ♘bd7 with equality (Tal-Botvinnik, Moscow 3rd matchgame 1960).

5...♘f6 6 d3 e6

It is well known that matches for the world championship determine chess fashion. Thus this position became one of the popular *tabiyas* of those times.



7 ♗e2

A harmless plan. In the 19th game White was successful after 7 a3 ♗e7 8 g4 ♘fd7 (8...dxe4!? 9 dxe4 ♘fd7) 9 d4 ♘f8? 10 ♗e3 ♘g6 11 ♕g3! ♗h4 12 ♕h2 ♘d7 13 0-0-0, but 9...♕b6! 10 ♕d3 e5 with equality is stronger. Also possible is 7...♘bd7 8 g4 g6 or 7...♗c5 (Fischer-Larsen, Zürich 1959; Tal-Portisch, Bled 6th matchgame 1965).

In the 1959 Candidates tournament the young Fischer employed with amazing persistence 7 g3 ♗b4!? (7...♘bd7 8 ♗g2 ♗c5 is more modest, Smyslov-Flohr, 18th USSR Championship, Moscow 1950) 8 ♗d2 d4 9 ♘b1, although it brought him nothing but disillusionment. Later they began playing more aggressively – 7 ♗d2!? ♘bd7 (7...♗d6 8 d4! – Keres) 8 g4 g6 9 0-0-0 or 9 h4.

7...♘bd7 8 ♕g3

Preventing the natural development of the f8-bishop and hoping to gradually outplay the opponent with the help of the two bishops. But Botvinnik convincingly demonstrates the soundness of his set-up.

8...g6! (a somewhat atypical move: Black is not afraid of e4-e5) **9 0-0**

If 9 e5 there is both the amusing 9...d4!? 10 exf6 dxc3 and the rigorous 9...♘g8 10 d4 ♘e7 with the subsequent exploitation of White's potential weaknesses. Or 9 h4 h5 10 0-0 ♕b6 11 ♖b1 ♗h6 with equality (Gurgenidze-Petrosian, Moscow 1961).

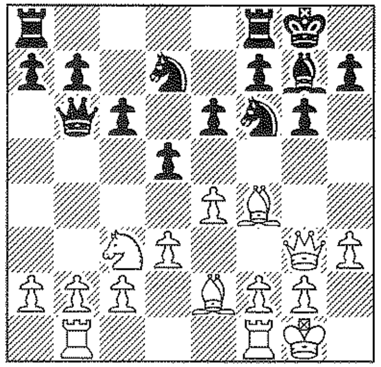
9...♗g7 10 ♗f4

Now if 10 e5 there follows 10...♘h5! 11 ♗xh5 ♗xe5 with a good game. According to Botvinnik, 10 f4 or 10 ♔h1 and f2-f4 is more energetic, but this is unlikely to give any advantage.

10...♕b6!

A very interesting, unexpected move. After 10...0-0? 11 ♗d6 ♖e8 12 e5 Black is in great difficulties.

11 ♖ab1 (nothing is promised by the alternative 11 e5 ♘g8 12 ♖ab1 – or 12 ♘d1 – 12...♘e7 etc.) **11...0-0**



12 ♗c7

'White tries to solve his problems with piece play alone. But Black's position is sufficiently solid, and White's two-move threats (12...♕b4? 13 ♗d6 or 12...♕a6? 13 d4!) are easily parried.' (Botvinnik)

Later Gligoric recommended 12 e5!? ♘e8 13 ♖fe1 and h3-h4 with a complicated game. 12 ♗f3 e5! 13 ♗d2 dxe4 14 dxe4 a5 with equality has also been played (Karpov-Portisch, Montreal 1979).

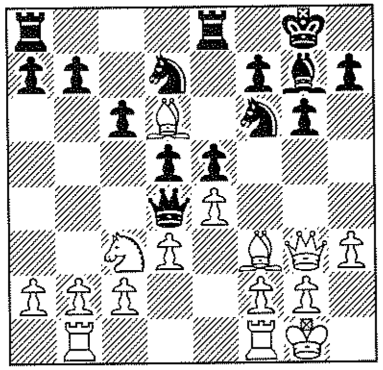
12...♕d4!

Centralisation! It becomes clear that the interesting manoeuvring struggle in the opening has concluded in Black's favour. The white bishop pair has nowhere to expand.

13 ♗f3 e5 (cutting off the bishop at c7) **14 ♗d6**

If 14 exd5?! both 14...♘xd5 and 14...cxd5 are good (15 ♘b5? ♕b4 16 c4 dxc4 17 ♘d6 ♕c5).

14...♖fe8



15 ♗a3

'On this occasion White creates a well camouflaged trap: 15...a6? 16 exd5 cxd5 17 ♘xd5! ♘xd5 18 c3 (18...♕xd3 19 ♖fd1). Black, naturally, avoids this continuation.' (Botvinnik) Perhaps White should have preferred 15 ♖fd1!? (but not 15 exd5? cxd5 16 ♘b5 ♕b6 17 c4 a6 and wins) 15...♖e6 16 ♗a3.

15...dxe4 16 dxe4?

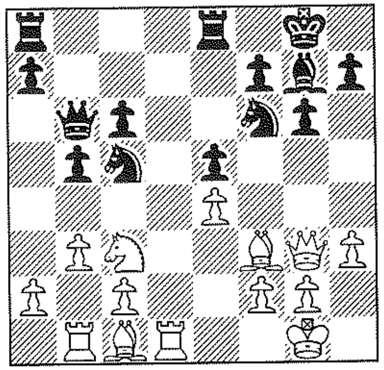
An imperceptible but serious error! Approximate equality would have been maintained by 16 ♘xe4! ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4. 'My opponent evidently assumed that he had nothing to fear, and on general grounds he avoided simplifying the position.' (Botvinnik)

16...b5! (with the unpleasant threat of ...b5-b4) **17 ♖fd1 ♕b6 18 b3**

It is dubious to play 18 ♗d6?! ♖e6 19 ♖d3 c5 20 ♖bd1 c4 21 ♘d5 ♘xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♘f6 23 ♖5d2 ♗h6 (Botvinnik). Now White would appear to be alright, but... the knight is manoeuvred to e6.

18...♘c5 19 ♗c1?!

19 ♗b2 was more appropriate.



19...♕c7

'Incorrectly avoiding 19...b4 20 ♘a4 ♘xa4 21 bxa4 ♕c5, when to 22 ♗e3 there is the reply 22...♕c4! with an obvious advantage. However, Black preferred not to clarify the position, in order to make things more difficult for his opponent, who was already in severe time-trouble.' (Botvinnik) Although, in my opinion, after 22 ♕h4! ♕c4 23 ♗g5 ♖e6 24 ♖b2 a5 Black's advantage is not so great, that he should regret not playing 19...b4.

20 ♗e3 ♘e6 21 a4

After 21 ♘e2 White has the same headache: how to release his queen from imprisonment? His position is worse than it appears at first sight, and after 21...♖ed8 22 c3 a5 the initiative is firmly with Black.

21...a6 22 b4?!

'Despite his time-trouble, White acts logically: by preventing ...b5-b4 he ensures that he can play ♗e2 and f2-f3, after which his queen will be able to return to the centre. However, b3-b4 involves a weakening of his queenside pawns.' (Botvinnik) This last factor proves decisive!

22...♖ad8 23 ♗e2 ♕e7 24 axb5?!

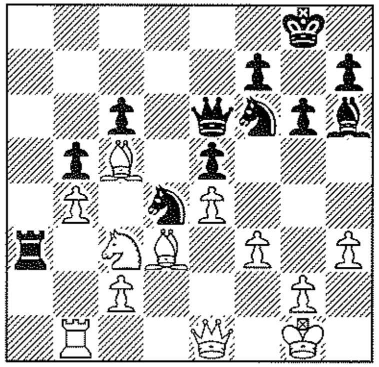
Not 24 ♕xe5? ♘h5, but also the opening of the a-file merely plays into Black's hands.

24...axb5 25 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26 ♗b6?!

A typical time-trouble 'move for the sake of a move'. White's game is rapidly going downhill. It would appear that Smyslov was simply shocked by his opponent's powerful positional play in the early stages of the game, especially when contrasted with the first game of their previous match (*Game No.109*).

26...♖a8 27 f3 ♖a3 28 ♕e1 (28 ♘d1? ♘xe4) **28...♗h6 29 ♗f1?! ♘d4 30 ♗c5 ♕e6** (with the threat of ...♘d7xc5) **31 ♗d3**

If 31 ♘d1, then both 31...♘xc2 32 ♕f2 ♘d4 33 ♗xd4 exd4 34 ♕xd4 ♘d7 and 31...♘d7 32 c3 ♘xc5 33 cxd4 ♘d3 are good.



31...♘d7 (forcing the exchange of the c5 bishop and achieving a technically won position) **32 ♗xd4 exd4 33 ♘e2 ♗e3+ 34 ♔h1 ♘e5**

'On this occasion Black too does not disregard some two-move threats – 35...♘xf3.' (Botvinnik)

35 ♕f1 (if 35 ♕h4, then 35...♘xd3 36 cxd3 ♕a2 37 ♖e1 ♕d2 and wins) **35...♕d6!**

It was too early for 35...♘xd3 36 cxd3 ♖xd3? in view of 37 ♘f4.

36 f4?!

Desperation with the flag about to fall! 'After the passive 36 ♕d1 Black, naturally, would have continued the attack with 36...♘c4.' (Botvinnik) But for the machine the natural moves are 36...h5 and 36...♕e7 with the possible sequel 37 ♘c1 ♕h4 38 ♗e2 ♕g3 39 ♘d3 ♘xd3 40 ♗xd3 ♗f4 41 ♕g1 ♖a2 (White is in zugzwang!) 42 ♖d1 ♖b2, picking up the b4-pawn.

36...♘xd3 37 cxd3 ♖xd3 38 ♕f3 ♖d2 39 ♖f1 ♕xb4 40 e5 ♕c4 41 ♘g3 ♖c2

The sealed move. On the resumption there followed **42 f5 ♖c1!** and White resigned... 20 moves later, although they were not essential.

An excellent win for Botvinnik which, like Smyslov's win in the first game in the 1957 return match, set the tone of the entire event. After this Smyslov lost two more games, and moreover the third was again in a Caro-Kann. A staggering result! The outcome of the return match was decided. Botvinnik won 12½-10½ (+7 -5 =11) and on 9 May 1958, exactly 10 years after he had first ascended the throne, he regained the crown that he had lost the previous year.

And in the ninth game of the 1960 match even the 'Riga magician', Mikhail Tal, who was irresistible at that time, became enmeshed in the Caro-Kann.

Game 73
M.Tal-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1960, 9th game
Caro-Kann Defence B18

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 (in the 1961 return match Tal tried 3 e5 without any great success: +1 =5 -2) **3...dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗f5**

The plan with 4...♘d7 (*Game No.146*) later became popular.

5 ♘g3

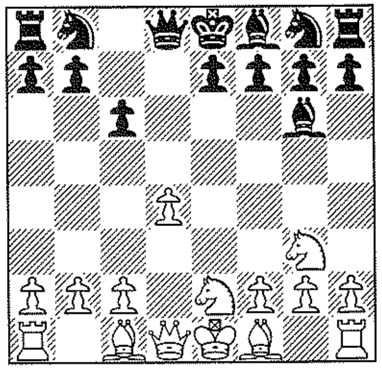
The richly inventive Bronstein experimented with 5 ♘c5!? here, for example: 5...b6 6 ♘b3 e6 7 ♘f3 ♗d6 8 g3 ♘e7 9 ♗g2 with a minimal advantage (Bronstein-Petrosian, Moscow 1966), or 5...♕b6 6 g4! ♗g6 7 f4 e6 8 ♕e2 ♗e7 9 h4 h5 10 f5! exf5 11 g5, blocking in the bishop at g6 (Bronstein-Beliavsky, 43rd USSR Championship, Yerevan 1975).

5...♗g6 6 ♘1e2

If 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♘1e2, then Black has

adequate play after 7...♘f6 8 ♘f4 ♗d6 9 0-0 ♘d5! 10 ♘gh5 0-0 11 ♗b3 ♘d7 12 ♘xg6 hxg6 13 ♘g3 ♕h4 with equality (Tal-Botvinnik, Moscow 2nd matchgame 1961) or 9 ♘xg6 hxg6 10 ♗g5 ♘bd7 11 0-0 (11 ♕e2!?) 11...♕a5! 12 f4?! (12 ♕d2 is equal) 12...0-0-0 13 a3 ♕c7! 14 b4 ♘b6 15 ♗e2 ♗e7 16 ♕d3 ♘fd5 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 c4 ♘f6 with a comfortable game for Black, who gradually achieved a winning position (Tal-Botvinnik, Moscow 17th matchgame 1960). It was after this game that Tal switched to 1 c4, explaining: 'To be honest, I was already sick of playing against the Caro-Kann Defence in this match...'

The main variation nowadays 6 h4! h6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7 was not highly rated at that time: 8 ♗d3 ♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 ♕c7 10 ♗d2 ♘gf6 11 0-0-0 e6 12 ♔b1 0-0-0 13 c4 c5 14 ♗c3 cxd4 15 ♘xd4 a6 16 ♕e2 ♗d6! (Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow 3rd matchgame 1958), or 16 ♘f3 ♗c5 17 ♕e2 ♗d6 18 ♘e4 ♗e7 (Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow 1st matchgame 1966) with equality in each case. The fashion for 8 h5! ♗h7 9 ♗d3 (*Game No.143*) arrived only after White's success in Spassky-Petrosian (Moscow 13th matchgame 1966).

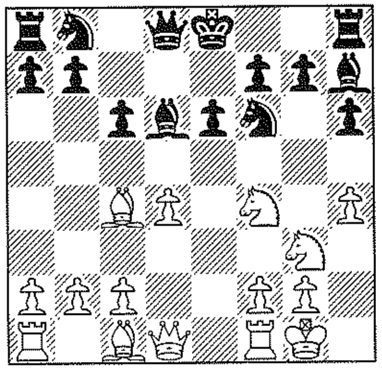


6...♘f6 (more accurate than 6...e6 and 6...♘d7, as in the fifth and seventh games) **7 h4 h6 8 ♘f4 ♗h7 9 ♗c4 e6** (this position can also be reached via 6 h4 h6 7 ♘h3 e6 8 ♘f4 ♗h7 9 ♗c4 ♘f6) **10 0-0**

White gains no advantage by either 10 ♕e2 ♗d6 11 ♗e3 (11 ♗xe6? 0-0!) 11...♘bd7 12 ♘gh5 ♘xh5 13 ♘xh5 ♖g8 14 g4 ♕c7 15 g5 ♗g6! 16 0-0-0 0-0-0 (Tal-Botvinnik, Moscow 5th matchgame 1960), or 10 ♗b3 ♗d6 11 ♘fh5 ♖g8 12 ♗f4 ♗xf4 13 ♘xf4 ♘bd7 14 ♕d2 ♕c7 15 0-0-0 0-0-0 (Ciocaltea-Botvinnik, Tel Aviv Olympiad 1964).

10...♗d6

If 10...♘d5 there is a choice between 11 ♕g4 and 11 ♕e2. 'Now Black wants to castle, after which the position of the pawn at h4 would give him an obvious advantage. Therefore, when I was preparing for the game, I anticipated that Tal would without hesitation sacrifice a knight for two pawns, in addition obtaining fine piece play.' (Botvinnik)



11 ♘xe6!?

An instantaneous reply. 'The speed with which White made his move confirms that it was the result of home analysis. Our mistake was that on this occasion we somewhat underestimated Botvinnik's phenomenal analytical power.' (Tal)

11...fxe6 12 ♗xe6 ♕c7

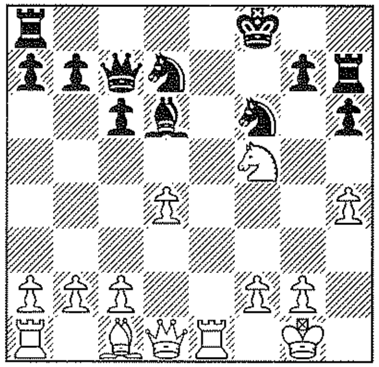
If 12...♗xg3 13 fxg3 ♗g8 White had prepared 14 ♕e1! (and if 14...♕e7, then 15 ♗c8!). The idea of the move in the game is correct: the rapid development of the queenside. But, in the opinion of both players, it was more accurate to play 12...♘bd7 13 ♖e1 (13 ♘h5 ♔f8) 13...♕c7, avoiding the variation from the following note.

13 ♖e1

'The unexpected flank "jab" 13 ♘h5 could have put my opponent in an unpleasant position. After 13...♖f8 (evidently the best reply) 14 f4 White succeeds in establishing his bishop at e6, which provides the grounds for the most diverse combinations.' (Tal) 'It is not so easy for Black to find an acceptable plan.' (Botvinnik) For example: 14...♗g6 15 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 16 f5 ♗f7 17 ♗g5 hxg5 18 hxg5 ♖xe6 19 fxe6 ♗g6 20 ♕f3 with advantage (P.Kondratiev). However, in a later game with Vukic (Bugojno 1978), Tal for some reason played 14 c4?! and after 14...♗g6! 15 ♘g3 ♘bd7 16 c5 ♗xg3 17 fxg3 ♘d5 18 ♖e1 0-0-0 he was fighting only for a draw.

13...♘bd7 14 ♗g8+ (preventing the black king from castling and establishing the knight at f5) **14...♔f8!** (the king would have stood much worse at d8) **15 ♗xh7 ♖xh7** (of course, not 15...♗xg3? 16 ♗g6) **16 ♘f5**

'We had examined this position, or one very close to it, at home and evaluated it very optimistically.' (Tal)



Of course, the two pawns are insufficient compensation for the piece, but if account is taken of the insecurity of Black's king and the unattractive position of his rook at h7, his practical difficulties become evident. White intends to calmly strengthen his position by 17 h5, ♕f3, ♗d2, ♖e2 and ♖ae1.

Such semi-correct sacrifices were an integral part of Tal's phenomenal successes in the late 1950s. Under the pressure of his demonic energy and the regular ticking of the clock, his opponents would often lose their heads. But in the given instance Tal encountered the inflexible iron will and the subtle psychological intuition of Botvinnik.

16...g6!?

After 26 minutes' thought. 'A move, as it seems to me, in the style of Capablanca. Black agrees to material equality (a piece for three pawns), but he quickly completes the mobilisation of his forces, and his pieces will be well coordinated. The following variation looked less convincing: 16...♗h2+ 17 ♔h1 g6 18 ♗xh6+ ♖xh6 19 ♘xh6 ♕f4 20 ♖e3 (but not 20 g3 ♗xg3 21 fxg3 ♕xg3) 20...♕xh6 21 ♔xh2 ♕xh4+ 22 ♔g1 (22...♘g4 23 ♕f3+ and 24 ♕g3).' (Botvinnik)

But let's study this variation more carefully: 18...♔g8! (instead of 18... ♖xh6?) 19 ♘e7+ (if 19 g3?! then not 19...gxf5 20 ♗f4 ♕xf4 21 gxf4 ♖xh4 22 ♔g2 ♔f7 23 ♖h1 ♖g8+ 24 ♔f1, but 19...♗xg3! 20 fxg3 gxf5, winning) 19...♔f7 20 ♗g5 ♗f4 21 ♘xg6! (21 ♕d3? ♗xg5 22 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 23 ♕xg5 ♖xe7 24 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 25 ♕g7+ ♔d8 26 ♖e1 ♕d6 and wins) 21...♗xg5 (but not 21...♔xg6? 22 ♕d3+ ♔f7 23 ♖e7+!) 22 ♖e7+ ♔g8 23 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 24 ♕d3! ♔g7! 25 ♘c7 (25 hxg5? ♘g4) 25...♖h8! 26 ♕g6+ ♔f8 27 ♕xg5 ♖h5 28 ♘g6+ ♔g7! (28...♔f7 29 ♘e5+! ♘xe5 30 ♕f4) 29 ♘f4+ ♖xg5 30 ♘e6+ ♔f7 31 ♘xc7 ♖g4 with good winning chances.

Although objectively the preparatory check 16...♗h2+ was stronger, Botvinnik's choice, as we will soon see, proves more practical. The counter pawn sacrifice sharply changes the character of the battle.

17 ♗xh6+ ♔g8 18 ♘xd6 ♕xd6

18...♖xh6 would have regained the pawn, but left White with attacking prospects: 19 ♖e6 ♖xh4 20 g3! (Tal was intending 20 ♕f3, whereas 20 ♕d3? allows Black a pretty win: 20...♘f8!! 21 ♖xf6 ♕h7 22 ♕b3+ ♔h8 etc.).

19 ♗g5 ♖e7!

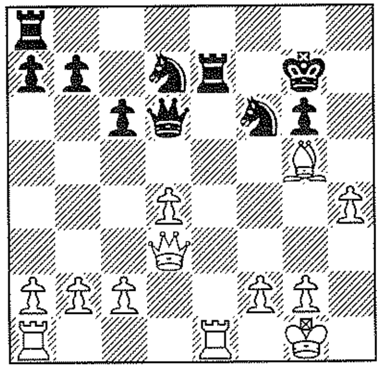
'The exchange of rooks reduces White's attacking potential. It is significant that for the moment he does not have any passed pawns.' (Botvinnik) In short, the three pawns are inferior to the minor piece; it is time for White to forget about his aggressive plans and play extremely cautiously, otherwise Black himself may build up a dangerous attack. It would appear that Tal was not prepared for such a turn of events and now started to become nervous...

20 ♕d3

In the endgame after 20 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 21 h5 gxh5 22 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 23 ♗xe7 ♘f4 a draw is the most probable outcome. But Black has the stronger 21... ♔g7 22 hxg6 ♖h8 (Botvinnik), 21...♕f7 (Tal) or the centralising 21...♕e4! with an obvious advantage to Black: 22 hxg6 (22 h6 ♕f5) 22...♕xg6 23 ♗e3 ♘g4.

20...♔g7

The culminating point of the game.



21 ♕g3?

An incorrect idea: Tal wanted to prevent the doubling of rooks (...♖ae8) and to break up the dangerous 'queen and two knights' trio, but in the ending with a broken pawn structure White has virtually no chance of saving the game. 'Undoubtedly the weakest move in the match. White should have decided on the previously intended 21 f4 ♖ae8 22 ♖e5! c5 23 c3 cxd4 24 cxd4 with sharp play, rich in chances.' (Tal) But in my opinion, 21 ♖xe7+ ♕xe7 22 ♕b3! was correct, diverting the opponent to the defence of his queenside: 22...b5 23 a4, 22...b6 23 ♕c4, or 22...♘b6 23 c4 ♖d8 (23...♕e6 24 d5! cxd5 25 c5) 24 ♕c3 – everywhere White maintains the balance.

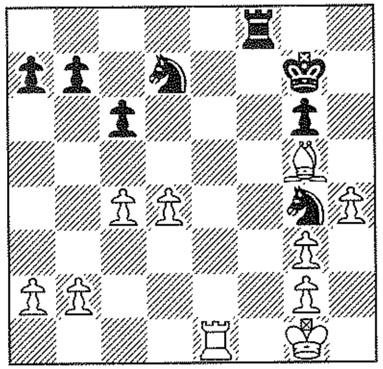
21...♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♕xg3 23 fxg3 ♖f8!

'An exceptionally strong move, which emphasises most clearly Black's positional advantage: now the white king cannot come into play (24 ♔f2? ♘e4+).' (Tal)

24 c4

White is unable to activate his kingside pawns: 24 ♖e7+ ♖f7 25 ♖xf7+ (25 ♗h6+ ♔g8 26 ♖e6 ♔h7! followed by ...♘d5 or ...♘g4) 25...♔xf7 26 ♔f2 ♔e6 27 ♔f3 ♔f5 etc.

24...♘g4



25 d5 (a desperate attempt to break the blockade; perhaps it would have been better to remain passive, although after 25 ♖e4 ♘df6 26 ♖f4 Tal did not like 26...♖e8) **25...cxd5 26 cxd5 ♘df6 27 d6 ♖f7**

'The white pawn has been stopped, and Black intends to set about eliminating it.' (Tal)

28 ♖c1 (or 28 ♗f4 ♖d7 and ...♘h5!) **28...♖d7 29 ♖c7** (of course, not 29 ♗f4 ♘d5 30 ♖c7?? ♘xc7 31 dxc7 ♖d1 mate) **29...♔f7 30 ♗xf6**

'White has to part with his bishop, in order to advance his kingside pawns.' (Botvinnik)

30...♘xf6 31 ♔f2 (the king hurries to lend a hand, but it is too late) **31...♔e6 32 ♖xd7** (or 32 ♔f3 ♔xd6) **32...♔xd7 33 ♔f3 ♔xd6 34 ♔f4 ♔e6**

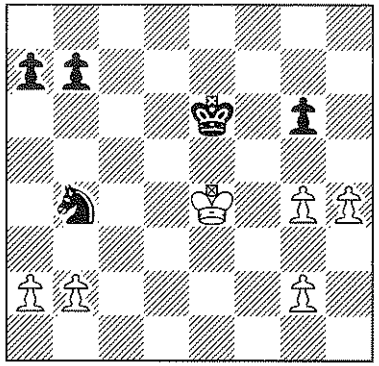
'After gobbling up a pawn, the king returns to base.' (Tal)

35 g4 ♘d5+ 36 ♔e4

After 36 ♔g5 ♔f7 37 h5 both players gave 37...♘b4 (38 a3 ♘d3), but 37...♔g7 38 hxg6 ♘b4 will also do, for example: 39 a4 ♘d3 40 b3 ♘c5, or 39 a3 ♘d3 40 b3 (40 b4 b5 41 ♔f5 ♘b2) 40...a5 41 ♔f5 (the white king is too late) 41...♘c1 42 b4 axb4 43 axb4 ♘a2 44 b5 ♘c3 45 b6 ♘a4 46 ♔e5 ♘xb6 47 ♔d6 ♘c8+ 48 ♔c7 b5 and the surviving pawn queens.

36...♘f6+ 37 ♔f4 ♘d5+ 38 ♔e4 ♘b4

The extra knight is bound to have its say.



39 a3?! (39 a4 is more tenacious, but in any case White cannot avoid the loss of his pawns) **39...♘c6 40 h5 g5**

With the revival of his g-pawn Black no longer has to fear the exchange of pawns on the other wing. The threat is 41...♘e5 42 h6 ♘xg4 43 h7 ♘f6+ and ...♘xh7.

41 h6 ♔f6!

This move was sealed after 42 minutes' thought: Botvinnik wanted to be sure that the raid of the white king to the queenside was not dangerous. On the resumption there followed:

42 ♔d5 (or 42 h7 ♔g7 43 ♔f5 ♘a5! 44 ♔xg5 ♘c4 and wins) **42...♔g6** (parrying the invasion of the enemy king is entrusted to the knight) **43 ♔e6**

It was equally hopeless to play 43 ♔d6 ♘a5! 44 ♔c7 b5 45 ♔b8 ♘c4 46 ♔xa7 (46 b3 a5!) 46...♘xb2 47 ♔b6 ♘c4+ 48 ♔xb5 ♘xa3+ etc.

43...♘a5 44 a4 ♘b3 45 ♔d6 a5 46 ♔d5 (46 ♔c7 ♘c5) **46...♔xh6 47 ♔c4 ♘c1 48 ♔b5 ♘d3 49 b3 ♘c1 50 ♔xa5 ♘xb3+ 51 ♔b4** (or 51 ♔b6 ♔g6 52 ♔xb7 ♘c5+ and ...♘xa4) **51...♘c1 52 ♔c3 ♔g6 53 ♔c2 ♘e2 54 ♔d3 ♘c1+ 55 ♔c2 ♘e2 56 ♔d3 ♘f4+ 57 ♔c4 ♔f6 58 g3 ♘e2 0-1**

One of those games that in the end induced Tal to make a highly noteworthy comment: 'Playing against Botvinnik, I all the time felt myself to be at best a student. We are all schoolchildren, students, postgraduates perhaps, but he is the professor.'

And Botvinnik himself later recalled: 'A year later in the return match I was able to demonstrate that the creative flaws in the play of the talented player from Riga were more important than his phenomenal calculating ability; but in the first match I was able to demonstrate this perhaps only once – in the ninth game.'

The last Return Match of the Era

Mikhail Moiseevich told me that towards the end of the 1960 match, when the score was '+3' in the challenger's favour, he asked Goldberg at a meeting with his helpers: 'What do you think, Grisha, should I play the return match?' The latter waved his hands about and expressed his doubts. Everyone was against it, blinded by the brilliance of Tal's combinations... 'It was then that I realised,' Botvinnik rapped out, 'that the return match definitely had to be played!' And already at the end of the first match with Tal he was outlining certain strategic contours of the coming battle.

In the autumn of 1960 Botvinnik performed splendidly for the USSR team at the World Olympiad in Leipzig – 10½ out of 13 on second board. Tal, playing on the neighbouring top board (11 out of 15) might have noticed that his great opponent had ceased to get into time-trouble. 'In Leipzig I discovered,' Mikhail Moiseevich later explained, 'that when I drink coffee during a game, I can last the full five hours.' From that time he began taking a thermos of coffee with him to a game.

Botvinnik was preparing! After thoroughly studying all the intricacies of the lost match, he decided, firstly, 'to learn from Tal and become a good, cunning, practical player,' and secondly, 'to prepare openings and middlegame plans associated with them, where the play was of a closed nature, the board broken into individual parts and the pieces with little mobility; the position might be objectively worse, but the opponent would be unable to make effective use of his capabilities...'

The young champion, by contrast, treated the forthcoming battle very light-heartedly. He smoked a great deal, he was in poor physical shape and, most important, he professed the disastrous theory of the 'clear head'. In his book on the first match with Botvinnik, which was completed in autumn 1960, Tal proclaimed: 'For such a tiring match it is far more important to keep a clear head, than to arrive for play with two suitcases of theoretical novelties, but on account of fatigue prove unable to consolidate an advantage gained from the opening.'

However, Tal had problems both with novelties, and with a clear head. Not long before the return match (Moscow, March-May 1961) he fell seriously ill and on the advice of the Riga doctors he suggested deferring the start of the match by a month. The USSR Sports Committee was ready to agree to the application of the Latvian Chess Federation. But in reply, Botvinnik, who continued to behave like the champion, demanded... that Tal should come to Moscow for an official medical examination! 'On learning about this demand,' grandmaster Averbakh recalls, 'Tal laughed: "Never mind, I'll beat him as it is!" Alas, this was an obvious mistake...' More than that – it was a defeat in the pre-match psychological duel.

The very first game sounded a warning bell for him: after achieving a favourable ending with Black, he contrived to lose from an almost level position. It is true that in the second game he was able to level the scores thanks to a mistake by Botvinnik in the time scramble, but in the third game he overlooked a tactical(!) blow by his opponent, ended up in a difficult position and again lost. The next three games ended in draws, and in two of them Tal escaped from time-trouble and salvaged a half-point only at the cost of incredible effort.

Botvinnik literally did not allow his opponent to breathe freely, although – a rare occurrence! – he carried out all his analytical work alone, without a second. As far as I recall, the seventh was one of his favourite games from the match.

Game 74

M.Botvinnik-M.Tal

World Championship Return Match,
Moscow 1961, 7th game
Nimzo-Indian Defence E24

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 d4 ♗b4 4 a3

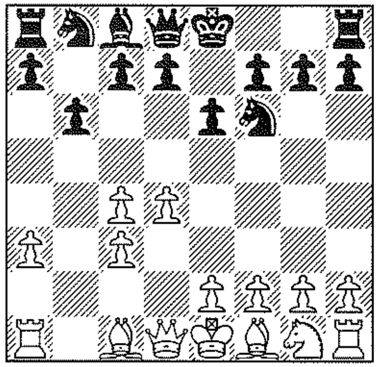
The first, third and fifth games saw the old variation 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 a3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 ♗d6 8 ♘f3 ♘c6 (Capablanca-Ragozin, Moscow 1936); in the first White won after 9 ♘b5?! e5 10 ♘xd6 ♕xd6! 11 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 12 ♔xd1 ♘g4 13 ♔e2 ♘cxe5 with equality, and he was also successful in the third after 9 b4 e5 10 ♗b2 ♗g4 11 d5 ♘e7 12 h3 ♗d7 13 ♘g5 ♘g6? (13...h6! equalises) 14 ♘e6! (the fruits of home preparation!) 14...fxe6 15 dxe6 ♔h8 16 exd7 ♕xd7 17 0-0 ♕f5 18 ♘d5 etc.

4...♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 b6

In the 1960 match Tal tried the dubious 5...♘e4 four times, for example: 6 e3! f5?! (6...0-0 really is better) 7 ♕h5+ g6 8 ♕h6 with the initiative (20th game). The most popular method against the dangerous Sämisch Variation is the undermining 5...c5:

1) 6 f3 (as played back in 1930 by Euwe) 6...d5 7 e3 0-0 8 cxd5 ♘xd5! 9 ♗d2 ♘c6 10 ♗d3 cxd4 11 cxd4 e5 with equality (Lilienthal-Botvinnik, Moscow 1935); therefore 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 dxc5!? (Keres) is more topical nowadays;

2) 6 e3 ♘c6 (6...b6 7 ♗d3 ♗b7 8 f3 ♘c6 9 ♘e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♘a5 11 e4 ♘e8! – *Game No.28*; 7 ♘e2!? ♘c6 8 ♘g3 0-0 9 ♗d3 ♗a6 10 e4 ♘e8! – *Game No.93*) 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 ♘e2 b6 9 0-0 ♗a6 10 e4 ♘e8! (*Game No.92*). The experimental 7...e5?! 8 ♘e2 e4 9 ♗b1 b6 10 ♘g3 ♗a6 11 f3! (Spassky-Tal, 25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958) will be examined in the Volume 3.



6 f3 (proceeding to occupy the centre)

6...♗a6 7 e4 d5?!

'A positional mistake, allowing White to immediately get rid of his weak c4-pawn. Already then I knew that 7...♘c6 gives Black a good game: after 8 ♗d3 ♘a5 9 ♕e2 d6! followed by ...♕d7-a4 (or c6) his position is perfectly sound. One gains the impression that, as regards opening preparation, my opponent had not made very fruitful use of the ten months separating our second match from the first.' (Botvinnik)

The move 7...♘c6 was known from the late 1940s, for example: 8 ♗g5 h6 (8...♘a5!? 9 e5 h6) 9 ♗h4 ♘a5 10 e5 (10 ♕a4 ♕c8! Geller-Smyslov, 17th USSR Championship, Moscow 1949) 10...g5 11 ♗f2 ♘h5 12 h4 f5!? (Simagin-Petrosian, Moscow 1950), or 8 e5 ♘g8 9 ♘h3 ♘a5 10 ♕a4 (Kotov-Keres, Budapest Candidates 1950) 10...h6!, in each case with double-edged play. 7...d5?! effectively justifies White's set-up.

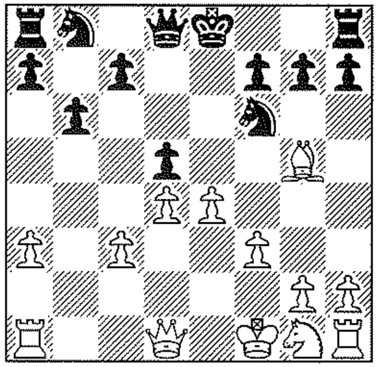
8 cxd5

Also good for White is 8 ♗g5!? h6 9 ♗h4 ♗xc4 10 ♗xc4 dxc4 11 ♕a4+ ♕d7 12 ♕xc4, as in the games Alekhine-Eliskases (Hastings 1933/34) and Lilienthal-Capablanca (Hastings 1934/35).

8...♗xf1 9 ♔xf1 exd5 10 ♗g5!

A typical thrust – and at the same time a strong novelty. Tal was expecting the previously played 10 e5 ♘g8 11 ♘e2 ♕d7 followed by ...♘c6 and ...0-0-0 with equality.

In 1986, before my return match with Karpov, Mikhail Moiseevich lent me his secret notebook, which contained many of his opening analyses, including some devoted to the Sämisch Variation. It transpired that before his return match with Tal, Botvinnik had studied it very seriously. And not in vain: his ideas were a big step forward for that era! It is another matter, that opening theory develops so rapidly, that today even my preparation for the 1986 return match seems to me to be rather primitive...



10...h6?!

The lesser evil was 10...dxe4 11 fxe4 h6 (11...♕d7?! 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 ♕f3) 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6+ 13 ♕f3, when Black is 'only' threatened with an inferior endgame. This did not appeal to Tal and, hoping to exploit the position of the king at f1, he keeps the queens on, which is what Botvinnik was counting on.

11 ♕a4+!

White follows a clear strategic course – he is conducting the game with great power! He avoids 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6! 12 exd5 0-0 13 ♘e2 ♖d8 14 c4, although Black may not have full compensation for the pawn here. On the other hand, he would have had counterplay against the weakened white king, and most important – the character of the play would have suited Tal perfectly well. 'True to my match tactics, I declined the pawn sacrifice, so as not to concede the initiative to my opponent.' (Botvinnik)

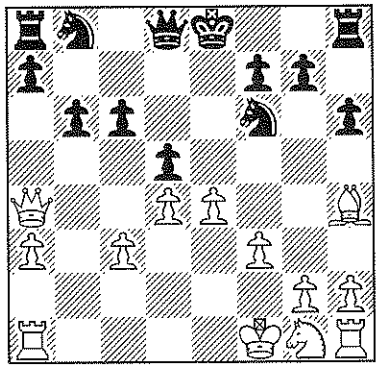
11...c6?!

'Avoiding 11...♕d7, since in the endgame after 12 ♕xd7+ ♘bxd7 13 ♗h4 dxe4 14 ♖e1 or 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 e5 White's advantage is obvious.' (Botvinnik)

However, 11...♕d7! 12 ♕xd7+ ♘bxd7 was undoubtedly the best defence: 13 ♗h4?! dxe4 14 ♖e1 0-0 15 fxe4 b5 16 ♘f3 ♖fe8 17 ♘d2 ♖e6 18 ♔f2 ♖ae8, or 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 e5 ♘g8! 15 ♘e2 ♘e7 16 ♘f4 ♔d7 in each case with equality. Therefore instead of 14 e5 I would have played 14 ♖e1! ♔d7 15 ♘h3 ♖ae8 16 e5 ♘g8 17 ♘f4 ♘e7 18 g4, still with some advantage.

12 ♗h4

Now after 12 ♗xf6?! ♕xf6! 13 exd5 0-0 Black definitely has sufficient compensation for the pawn: 14 dxc6 ♘xc6 15 ♘e2 ♖fe8 etc.



12...dxe4?!

'A highly dubious decision. The opening of lines in the centre merely assists the development of White's initiative.' (Botvinnik) It is easy to criticise – but what should Black play?

13 ♖e1 g5 (an enforced weakening) **14 ♗f2!** (14 ♗g3?! ♕d5! was inaccurate) **14...♕e7**

'Now if 14...♕d5?! there is 15 c4 ♕e6 16 ♕c2 0-0 17 fxe4 with a decisive advantage for White.' (Botvinnik)

15 ♘e2!

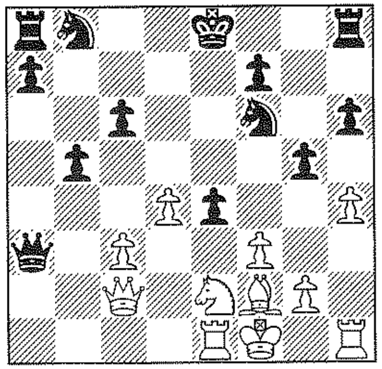
A rigorous move by the 'iron hand': the knight is aiming for g3, to take control of the centre and the weak f5-square. 15 fxe4?! ♘xe4 16 ♕c2 f5 17 g4 ♘d7 18 gxf5 ♘df6 was weaker.

15...b5 16 ♕c2 ♕xa3

'If 16...e3, then 17 ♗xe3 ♘d5 18 ♗c1. Convinced that the positional battle is lost, Black tries at least to retain a material advantage.' (Botvinnik)

17 h4!

'Play in the grand manner – this is the style of a champion! It is time to bring the h1-rook into the battle.



17...gxh4?!

A negligent move, indicating Tal's indifferent form in this match: Black breaks up his own position. He should have made the difficult choice between two other replies:

1) 17...♖g8 18 hxg5 hxg5 (recommended by Botvinnik) 19 ♘g3 ♕a4! (the only move: 19...♘bd7?! 20 ♘xe4 0-0-0 21 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♖h6! is inferior) 20 ♕xa4 (20 ♕b1 ♘bd7 21 ♘xe4 0-0-0 22 ♘d6+ ♔b8 is not so clear) 20...bxa4 21 ♖h6 ♘bd7 22 fxe4 and Black has a difficult position all the same after 22...♖b8 23 e5 ♘d5 24 ♖xc6 ♖g6 25 ♖xg6 fxg6 26 ♘e4 etc.;

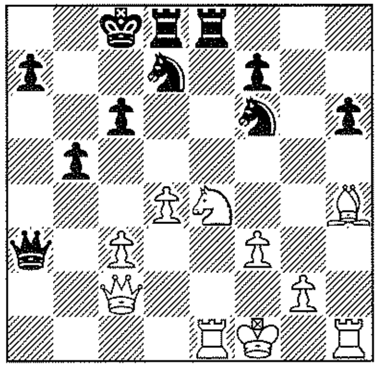
2) 17...g4 18 ♘g3 (Botvinnik suggests 18 fxe4!?) 18...♘bd7 19 fxe4 0-0-0 20 ♘f5 ♘b6 21 h5 ♖d7 22 ♗g3 ♘c4 23 ♗f4 with the initiative for White, but at least Black would still have some counter-chances.

18 ♗xh4 (the bishop comes into play with decisive force and Black's position becomes hopeless) **18...♘bd7 19 ♘g3 0-0-0**

Or 19...♕a4 20 ♕d2. 'On the queenside too the king will not find a quiet refuge, and loss of material for Black becomes inevitable.' (Botvinnik)

20 ♘xe4 ♖he8!?

A typical Tal chance! After 20...♘xe4? 21 ♕xe4 ♕xc3 22 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 23 ♖h4 White is a healthy exchange to the good.



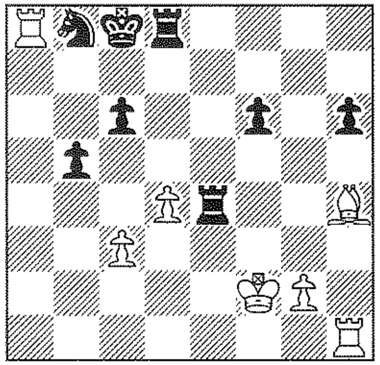
21 ♔f2!

Another strong move, killing any chances. Black was hoping to muddy the water after 21 ♘xf6? ♖xe1+ 22 ♔xe1 ♕a1+ 23 ♕d1 ♕xc3+ 24 ♔f1 ♘e5 with unclear complications: 25 ♗f2 ♘d3 26 ♘e4 ♘xf2! (26...♕c4? 27 g4) 27 ♔xf2 ♕b2+ etc.

Apart from the continuation in the game, the interesting 21 ♖h3!? was not mentioned by anyone. This would have immediately won material: 21...♘xe4 22 ♗xd8.

21...♘xe4+ 22 fxe4 f6 23 ♖a1! (White's attack is so strong, that even the exchange of queens fails to rescue Black from it) **23...♕e7 24 ♖xa7 ♕xe4 25 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 26 ♖a8+ ♘b8**

There is no time for 26...♔c7 because of 27 ♗g3+.



27 ♗g3 ♔b7 28 ♖ha1 (with the threat of 29 ♖1a7+ ♔b6 30 ♗c7 mate) **28...♖c8 29 ♖8a7+ ♔b6 30 ♗xb8 b4** (30...♖xb8 31 ♖1a6 mate!) **31 ♗d6 bxc3 32 ♗c5+ ♔b5 33 ♖1a4 1-0**

'For the first time in my life I was knocked out in the opening!' (Tal)

As Mikhail Moiseevich commented, 'from the character of the play, one might imagine that it was Tal playing White, and Botvinnik playing Black.' In my view, White conducted the game more in the style of Alekhine: from the very first moves he seized the initiative which he developed with very aggressive play. An excellent game, demonstrating the difference between the 1961 return match and the 1960 match: on this occasion Botvinnik played much more confidently, not avoiding complications and the calculation of 'dangerous' variations.

The score became 4½-2½ in favour of the ex-champion, but Tal did not even think of becoming depressed. After winning the eighth game in excellent style, he assured his friends: 'Now everything is alright – my play is back to normal!' But then he caught flu and was forced to claim a postponement. In the ninth game he badly mishandled the Keres counter-attack in the English Opening: after **1 c4 ♘f6**

2 ♘c3 e5 3 g3 c6 4 ♘f3 e4 5 ♘d4 d5 6 cxd5 ♕b6 7 ♘b3 cxd5 8 ♗g2 a5? (correct is 8...♗f5! 9 d3 ♗b4 10 0-0 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 0-0 Reshevsky-Keres, Los Angeles 1963) **9 d3 a4 10 ♗e3 ♕b4 11 ♘d4 a3 12 ♘c2! ♕xb2 13 ♗d4! ♗b4 14 ♘xb4 ♕xb4 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 0-0!** Black's hopes were dashed and, despite some tenacious resistance, he resigned on the 73rd move.

In the 10th game Tal was unrecognisable (as was Bronstein in the 12th game of the 1951 match): **1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 h4 h6** (4...h5!? – 14th game) **5 g4 ♗d7 6 h5 c5 7 c3** (seven moves with pawns alone!) **7...♘c6 8 ♗h3?!** (8 f4!) **8...e6 9 ♗e3?! ♕b6 10 ♕b3?! cxd4! 11 ♕xb6 axb6 12 cxd4 ♘a5! 13 ♘c3 b5** and Black, following the pattern of the game Janowski-Capablanca (New York 1916), won on the 43rd move.

These were the decisive days of the return match: Tal clearly could not withstand the tension of the struggle. In the 11th game Botvinnik built on his success, gaining his third successive win. He again caught his opponent in a prepared variation and was able to impose his own play, on this occasion demonstrating how much more deeply he understood the 'simple' positions of the Slav Defence.

Game 75

M.Botvinnik-M.Tal

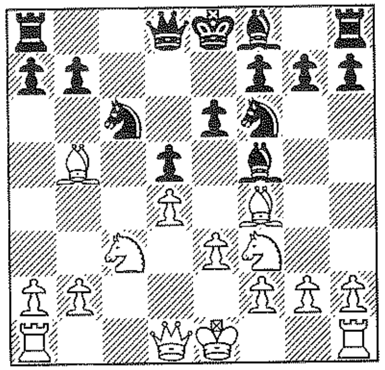
World Championship Return Match,
Moscow 1961, 11th game
Slav Defence D14

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 d5

'A psychological mistake. After losing the two preceding games, Tal evidently decided to take a breather and make a quick draw. Not without reason he expected the Exchange Variation of the Slav Defence, but he failed to appreciate that even in this variation it is not so easy for Black to gain a draw, if he does not have a prepared plan of action.' (Botvinnik)

4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 ♗f4 ♗f5 (Lasker, Smyslov, Petrosian and Botvinnik himself used to prefer the more restrained 6...e6) **7 e3 e6 8 ♗b5**

This is more subtle than 8 ♕b3 ♗b4! 9 ♗b5 0-0 with equality (Botvinnik-Trifunovic, Chigorin Memorial Tournament, Moscow 1947).



8...♗b4?!

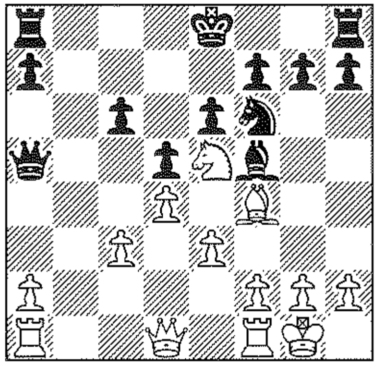
Since the time of Grünfeld's *Taschenbuch der Eroffnungen im Schach* it has been known that it is better to play 8...♘d7! 9 ♕a4! (9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♖c1 0-0 with equality, Spassky-Larsen, Malmö 1st matchgame 1968; we will analyse this game in Volume 3) 9...♖c8!?, and here 10 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 11 ♕xa7?! is dangerous because of 11...♕c8! But Botvinnik guessed correctly that his opponent would not go in for the variation with a pawn sacrifice!

Later White players tried to fight for an advantage with 10 0-0 a6 11 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 12 ♖fc1 ♗e7 13 ♘e2 (13 ♘d1 b5!) 13...♗d3?! 14 ♖xc6 bxc6 (if 14...♗b5 White had prepared 15 ♕xb5!! axb5 16 ♖c7) 15 ♘c1 ♗b5 16 ♕c2 c5 17 a4 ♗c6 18 dxc5 ♘xc5 19 b4! (Petrosian-Sveshnikov, 44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976). However, 13...♕b6! 14 ♖xc6 bxc6 with equality is a sounder way for Black to play.

9 ♘e5 ♕a5 (9...0-0 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 0-0 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♖c8 13 ♗g5! c5 14 ♕a4 favours White) **10 ♗xc6+**

It is also possible to begin with 10 0-0.

10...bxc6 11 0-0 ♗xc3 (after 11...c5?! they recommended 12 ♘c6 ♕b6 13 ♘xb4 cxb4 14 ♕a4+! and 15 ♘b5, but I suggest 12 dxc5!? ♗xc5 13 ♖c1 0-0 14 a3! with the unexpected win of a pawn: 14...♕a6 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♖xc5) **12 bxc3**



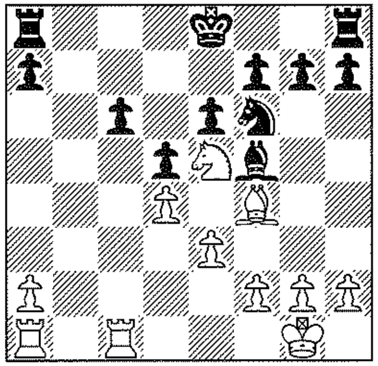
12...♕xc3

Tal probably thought that Black was not under any particular threat. Besides, if 12...♖c8, then 13 c4! is unpleasant. In the well-known game Botvinnik-Pomar (Amsterdam 1966) White gained an overwhelming advantage after 13...0-0 14 g4! ♗g6 15 c5 ♘e4?! 16 f3! ♘d2 17 ♖f2 ♘c4 18 ♘xc4 dxc4 19 ♗d6 ♖fe8 20 e4.

13 ♕c1! (a strong move: it turns out that the endgame is worse for Black) **13...♕xc1**

13...♗c2? will not do in view of 14 ♖b1 ♘e4 15 ♖b2 ♗a4 16 f3 ♕xc1 17 ♖xc1 etc.

14 ♖fxc1



14...0-0?!

'This leads to a further deterioration of Black's position. His main defensive trump was the centralised position of his king. Now, apart from anything else, he will have to reckon with the threat of ♘xc6, ♘e7+ and ♘xf5. Therefore 14...♘d7 was preferable.' (Botvinnik)

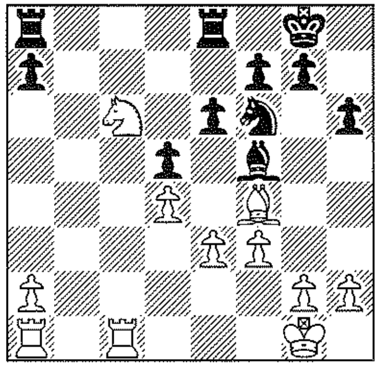
A strong recommendation! The manoeuvre 14...♘d7! (in contrast to 14...♘h5 15 g4! ♘xf4 16 exf4 ♗e4 17 ♖xc6) would have given Black every chance of a successful defence; in any event, I have not found any way for White to gain a real advantage: 15 ♘xc6 ♘b6! 16 ♖c5 (16 ♘a5 0-0) 16...f6 17 f3 ♔d7 etc.

15 f3 (15 ♘xc6!? ♖fe8 16 f3 is also possible)

15...h6

15...♘h5 was somewhat stronger, when White retains the initiative by 16 g4! ♘xf4 17 exf4 ♗g6 18 ♖xc6, for example: 18...♖fb8 19 ♖ac1 ♖b1 (if 19...f6, then 20 ♘xg6 hxg6 21 ♖xe6) 20 ♖xb1 ♗xb1 21 a3 etc.

16 ♘xc6 ♖fe8

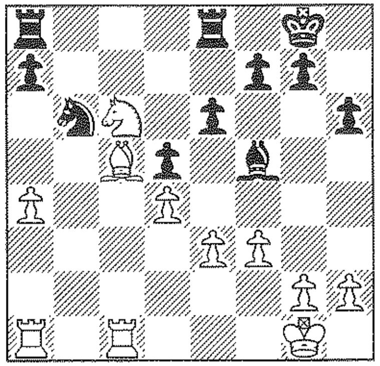


17 a4

'Exploiting his spatial advantage, White selects the a7-pawn as a target, since it will not be easy for the black bishop to come to its aid.' (Botvinnik) The knight at c6 dominates, and it is now apparent that Tal has a difficult, if at all defensible, position.

17...♘d7 18 ♗d6 ♘b6 19 ♗c5

'After Black has prepared to occupy c4 with his knight, the threat of ♘e7+ and ♘xf5 has lost its strength, since White would have problems over the defence of his e3-pawn.' (Botvinnik)



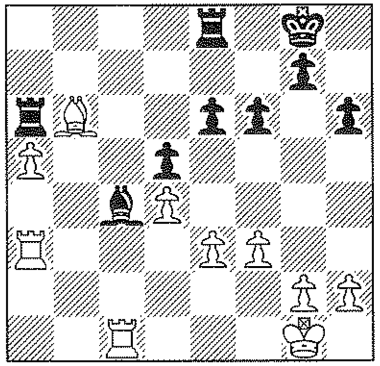
19...♗d3?!

Black gives up a pawn, in order to exchange the powerful c6-knight and obtain opposite-coloured bishops. According to Botvinnik, 19...♘c4? was bad because of 20 e4 ♗g6 21 exd5 (or 21 ♗xa7) 21...exd5 22 ♘e7+ ♔h7 23 ♘xd5, and Black also has a difficult game after 19...♘c8 20 ♖a3! (but not 20 a5?! ♗d3!) – I think that Tal simply did not believe that here he would be able to defend himself after, say, 20...a5 21 ♖b3 ♖a6 22 ♘b8 ♖a8 23 ♘d7 etc.

20 ♘xa7 ♖xa7 21 ♗xb6 ♖a6

Not the best place for the rook, but in any case Black's hopes of setting up a fortress prove unrealisable.

22 a5 ♗c4 23 ♖a3 f6?!



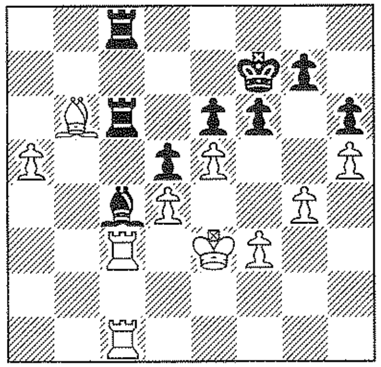
I agree with Botvinnik: 23...f5 was more tenacious. However, after 24 e4 the evaluation of the position is unchanged: White will break through all the same sooner or later and the passed a-pawn will have its say.

24 e4 ♔f7 25 ♔f2 ♖aa8 26 ♔e3 ♖eb8 27 ♖ac3 ♖c8 28 g4

A textbook plan: after bringing up his king and activating his rook (the exchange sacrifice ♖xc4 is a possible threat), White begins a pawn offensive on the kingside. His aim, in the words of Botvinnik, is either to penetrate with his rooks into the enemy rear, or to create another passed pawn.

28...♖ab8 29 h4 ♖c6 30 h5 ♖bc8 31 e5!

A complete squeeze! White intends to breach the enemy defences by e5xf6, f3-f4 and g4-g5. Now the win for him is merely a question of time.



31...g6?!

Tal cannot endure the burden of passive defence. This opening hastens the end.

32 hxg6+ ♔xg6 33 ♖3c2 fxe5 34 dxe5 ♖h8 35 ♖h2 ♖cc8 (35...h5? 36 ♖ch1) **36 ♔d2 ♗b3?**

Allowing the a-pawn to advance. If 36...♖h7 a possible variation is 37 ♖ch1 ♖f8 38 ♖h3 ♖a8 39 ♔c3 ♖ah8 40 ♗e3 h5 41 ♔d4 hxg4 42 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 43 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 44 fxg4 ♔g6 45 ♔c5 and wins.

37 a6 ♗c4 38 a7 ♖h7 39 ♖a1 ♖a8 40 ♗e3 (with the intention of ♖b1-b8 or ♖ah1) **40...♖b7?** (time-trouble!) **41 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 42 ♖ah1 ♖b2+ 1-0**

Black resigned, without waiting for 43 ♔c1 and ♖h7+.

With the score standing at 7½-3½ in Botvinnik's favour, the outcome of the match was no longer in doubt. True, in the 12th game Tal was again able to breach the French Defence – in the same sharp variation as in the 1960 match (cf. *Game No.127*). However, the ex-champion won the 13th and 15th games, and the gap rose to five points: 10-5! (Botvinnik could also have had such a lead in the 1958 return match, but on that occasion he unexpectedly lost on time during the resumption of the 15th game).

Tal's weak opening preparation and poor form are indicated by cold statistics: at that point he had scored only ½ out of 8 with Black – an unprecedented occurrence in the modern history of world championship matches!

Towards the finish the almost 50-year-old Botvinnik began to feel tired, and here Tal revived: he was close to a win in the 16th game, and although he played the 18th very weakly, he won two King's Indians with Black in the 17th and 19th games. In the first of these there was a difficult position, a time scramble and an entertaining endgame with two bishops against a knight, while the second was a grandiose 10-hour struggle.

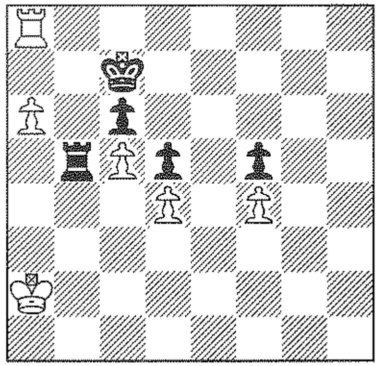
'Later I learned,' writes Botvinnik,' that the well-known hypnotist Wolf Messing has been summoned from Riga "to help". However, they forgot that I was short-sighted; I, of course, did not notice that Messing was in the audience... Tal pressed (one can envy his fighting qualities!), but after the 20th game he was broken.'

This game was adjourned in a position that was very difficult for Botvinnik. When the game was resumed, Tal missed a winning continuation as early as the 45th move, but his opponent also went wrong and found himself in a lost rook endgame. On the 72nd move Tal again overlooked a path leading to a win. Then on the 89th move the game was adjourned for the second time, and it seemed to everyone that Botvinnik was lost. But after a second successive sleepless night he was able to discover a pretty stalemate idea.

Game 76

M.Tal-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Return Match,
Moscow 1961, 20th game



90 a7?!

It was this that Botvinnik was hoping for, when he arrived for the resumption with a doomed appearance and without his usual thermos of coffee (despite being extremely tired). 'This was the most obvious indication that I would make only a few moves and resign the game, but during these moves Tal might overlook a stalemate!'

However, Tal had hardly analysed the ending at all, since he was exhausted. He later stated that, on again sitting down at the board, he 'failed to notice the expressive faces of the stage attendants, who had heard from Botvinnik that his position was hopeless, nor did I pay any attention to the absence of my opponent's traditional thermos, and I even failed to take into account the distressed shaking of his head.'

According to Botvinnik, more problems would have been set by 90 ♖f8! ♖a5+ 91 ♔b3 ♖xa6 92 ♖xf5 ♔d7 93 ♖f6 ♖a1 94 f5 ♖d1 95 ♔c3 ♖c1+ 96 ♔d2 ♖f1 97 ♖f7+ ♔d8 98 ♔c3, although here too it would appear that Black can draw: 98...♖b1 99 ♔c2 (99 f6 ♖f1 100

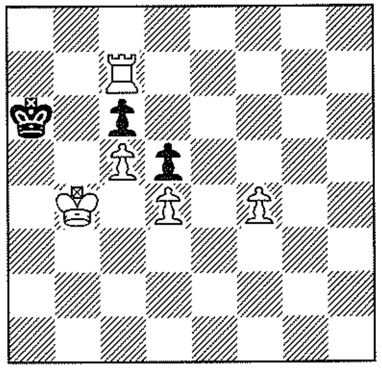
♔b4 ♔e8) 99...♖b4 100 ♔d3 ♖b3+ 101 ♔e2 ♖h3 102 f6 ♖h4 103 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 104 ♔d3 ♖f4.

90...♖a5+ 91 ♔b3 ♔b7 92 ♖f8 ♖b5+! 93 ♔a4

If 93 ♔c3 Black was planning 93...♖a5! 94 ♖xf5 ♔xa7 95 ♖f7+ (95 ♖f6 ♔b7 96 f5 ♖a3+) 95...♔a6 96 ♖c7 ♖a3+ 97 ♔b4 ♖a4+! with the same stalemate. 'The black king, and this is very important, is not driven onto the eighth rank.' (Botvinnik)

93...♔xa7 94 ♖xf5 ♖b1 95 ♖f6

Probably only here did Tal notice that the 'natural' 95 ♖f7+ ♔a6! 96 ♖c7 ♖b4+!! 97 ♔xb4 leads to stalemate!



Analysis diagram

Therefore White deviated, in order, in the words of Botvinnik, 'to retain the hope of some mistake by his tired opponent.' But nothing came of this:

95...♔b7 96 f5 ♖a1+ 97 ♔b4 ♖b1+ 98 ♔c3 ♖c1+ 99 ♔d2 ♖f1 (cutting off the king along the f-file) **100 ♔e3 ♔c7 101 ♖f7+ ♔d8 102 ♔e2 ♖f4 103 ♔d3 ♖f3+ 104 ♔d2 ♔c8 105 ♔e2 ♖f4 106 ♔e3 ♖f1 107 ♖f8+ ♔d7 108 ♖f6 ♔c7 109 ♖f7+ ♔d8 110 ♔e2 ♖f4 111 ♔d3 ♖f3+ 112 ♔c2 ♔c8 113 f6 ♔d8 114 ♖f8+ ♔c7 115 ♔d2 ♔b7 116 ♔e2 ♖f4 117 ♔e3 ♖f1 118 ♖f7+ ♔c8 119 ♔d2 ♖f3 120 ♔c2 ♔d8 121 ♖f8+ ♔c7 ½-½**

This game turned out to be the most protracted in all the preceding history of matches for the crown. The previous record belonged to the 14th game of the Tarrasch-Lasker match (1908), where White, desperately trying to win the ending with rook and bishop against rook, reconciled himself to a draw on the 120th move. And a new record was established in the fifth game of the Korchnoi-Karpov match (1978): a draw after White's 124th move.

The next day Botvinnik won the 21st game, and with it the return match: 13-8 (+10 -5 =6), thereby once more regaining the title of world champion. His victory was absolutely undisputed: he had found the algorithm of how to play against Tal! Thirty-three years later, not long before he died, Mikhail Moiseevich was to say in an interview for the magazine *New in Chess*:

'After their matches with me, Bronstein, Smyslov and Tal no longer showed their former strength. I am to blame for this, since I exposed them, and then everyone understood how to play against them.'

An interesting, although also questionable assertion: you will recall Tal's two record-breaking unbeaten series in the 1970s and his conviction that he would have simply torn the 1960 challenger to pieces...

Duel of the Generations

The only meeting between the sixth and 11th world champions took place in the autumn of 1962 at the World Olympiad in Varna. The clash between the formidable USSR team (Botvinnik, Petrosian, Keres and Spassky, reserves Geller and Tal, trainers Boleslavsky and Furman) and the Americans who were in contention for a high place (Fischer, Benko, Evans, Robert Byrne etc.) truly became the 'match of the Olympiad'. On that day (it was the penultimate round) the hall could not accommodate all the spectators, and the Botvinnik-Fischer game was demonstrated outside on the street.

The mood of the 19-year-old Fischer, the recent winner of the Interzonal in Stockholm and the fourth prize-winner at the Candidates tournament in Curaçao, is evident from the memoirs of Tal, who decided to interview Bobby during the Olympiad: 'The first question that I asked him was: "Who do you consider to be the strongest player in the world?" He looked at me in such surprise... I promptly corrected myself: "Apart from yourself, of course." He again looked attentively at me: "Well, you don't play too badly..." '

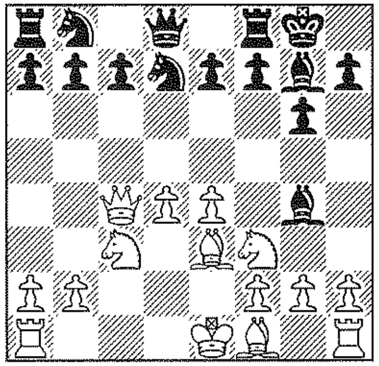
The 51-year-old Botvinnik was also tuning himself up for a fight. This game, especially its concluding phase, was unusually dramatic. 'Success in chess is decided not only by talent, but also by other qualities, including the character of a player,' Mikhail Moiseevich wrote later. 'And Fischer's character was always clearly inadequate, as the reader will probably agree, after playing through our game.'

Game 77
M.Botvinnik-R.Fischer
Varna Olympiad 1962
Grünfeld Defence D98

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5

'The spur of the moment. I could see by the glint of his eye that he had come well armed for my King's Indian.' (Fischer)

4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♗g4 8 ♗e3 ♘fd7 (the Smyslov Variation)



9 ♗e2

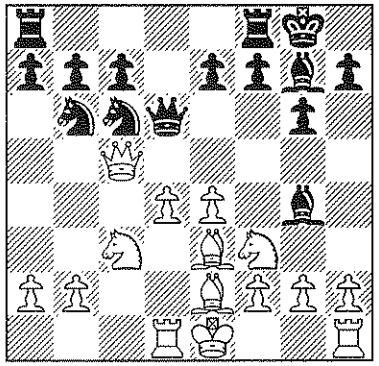
9 ♖d1 ♘c6 (9...♘b6 – *Game No.113*) 10 ♗e2 comes to the same thing (but not 10 ♕b3?! e5! 11 dxe5 ♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♘cxe5 Evans-Fischer, USA Championship 1962).

In those years move order did not play such an important role as it does now. In time the main continuation became the 'subtle' 9 ♕b3 ♘b6 10 ♖d1 (10 a4?! – *Game No.90*), and the most fashionable became the sharp 9 0-0-0, which was tried by Smyslov in the sixth game of his 1957 match with Botvinnik (*Game No.110*) and then employed for many years by grandmaster Sosonko, and which again came to prominence after Piket's win over Shirov (Wijk aan Zee 1996).

9...♘c6

Deviating from the approved 9...♘b6 10 ♕c5 c6 11 ♖d1 ♘8d7 12 ♕a5 e5! with equality (Botvinnik-Smyslov, Moscow 4th match-game 1958).

10 ♖d1 ♘b6 11 ♕c5 ♕d6!



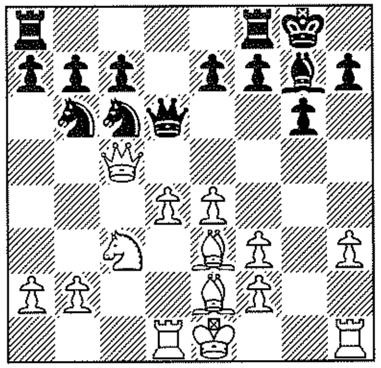
12 h3

'12 ♕xd6 is answered by 12...cxd6!, improving Black's pawn structure and neutralising White's centre.' (Fischer) And if 12 d5, then 12...♘e5 13 ♘xe5 (or 13 ♘b5 ♕xc5 14 ♗xc5 c6) 13...♗xe2 14 ♔xe2 ♗xe5 15 ♕xd6 cxd6 16 ♗d4 ♖fc8 17 ♗xe5 dxe5 18 ♖c1 ♘c4 19 b3 ♘d6 with equality.

Apparently the only way of fighting for the initiative is 12 e5! ♕xc5 13 dxc5 ♘c8 14 h3! ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♗xe5 16 ♗xc6 bxc6 17 ♗d4! ♗f4 18 0-0, and here instead of 18...a5? 19

♖fe1 a4 20 ♖e4 ♗h6 21 ♗e5 a3 22 b3 ♘a7 23 ♖d7 ♗c1 24 ♖xc7 ♗b2 25 ♘a4 ♘b5 26 ♖xc6 and wins (Karpov-Kasparov, London/Leningrad 17th matchgame 1986) Black is saved only by 18...e5! 19 ♗e3 ♗xe3 20 fxe3 ♘e7 21 ♖d7 ♘f5 22 ♖xc7 ♖fc8 23 ♖d7 (or 23 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 24 ♔f2 ♖b8 25 b3 ♖d8) 23...♖d8 24 ♖fd1 ♖xd7 25 ♖xd7 ♘xe3 26 ♖c7 ♖b8 27 b3 ♖d8 with equality (Karpov-Timman, Tilburg 1986).

12...♗xf3 13 gxf3 (inferior is 13 ♗xf3 ♕xc5 14 dxc5 ♘c4!)



13...♖fd8

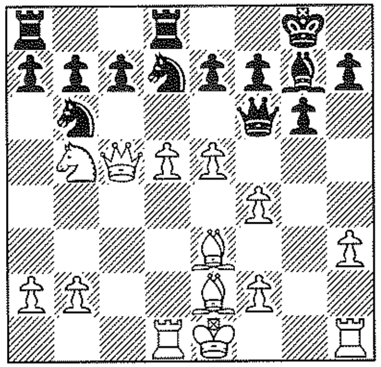
'I analysed this position back in the winter of 1958, when preparing for my return match with Smyslov.' (Botvinnik) Instead 13...♕xc5?! 14 dxc5 ♗xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♘a4 16 ♔d2! favours White.

14 d5 (14 ♘b5?! ♕xc5 15 dxc5 ♘a4!; 14 e5?! ♕xc5 15 dxc5 ♘d7 16 f4 g5!) **14...♘e5 15 ♘b5** (15 f4?! ♘ec4 16 ♗xc4 ♕xc5 17 ♗xc5 ♘xc4 18 e5 ♘xb2 19 ♖d4 f6! is bad for White) **15...♕f6**

'Weak is 15...♕xc5 16 ♗xc5 c6 17 ♘c7 (not 17 ♘xa7? ♘a4) 17...♖ab8 18 ♗xe7 ♖d7 19 d6 ♘c8 (*19...♘ec4!? – G.K.*) 20 ♘e8! (not 20 f4? ♘xe7 21 fxe5 ♗xe5 22 dxe7 ♖xe7) 20...♘xe7 21 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 22 f4!' (Fischer) However, after 22...g5! 23 fxe5 (23 ♖g1 ♘7g6) 23...♘g6 24 ♖g1 h6 25 h4 ♘xh4 26 f4 ♖e8 the position remains unclear.

16 f4 ♘ed7 17 e5

Of course, not 17 ♕xc7? ♕xb2 (for example: 18 a3 a6! 19 ♘d4 ♖dc8 20 ♕xb7 ♕c3+ 21 ♔f1 ♖c7 22 ♗d2 ♕c5 and wins), but 17 ♕c3!? was interesting.



17...♕xf4!

Alas, in Botvinnik's secret notebook, where the Grünfeld Defence was also analysed, this move was missing. 'An unpleasant surprise! In my analysis I had considered only 17...♕h4? 18 ♕a3 g5 19 ♖d4! and 17...♕f5? 18 ♕b4 a5 19 ♕d4. It is true that here too White still has a good game, but the surprise shocked me. I was extremely vexed by my poor analysis and so subsequently I made several weak moves.' (Botvinnik)

18 ♗xf4 (if 18 ♕xb6?, then 18...♕e4! 19 f3 ♕h4+ 20 ♗f2 ♕b4+ and 21...axb6) **18...♘xc5 19 ♘xc7 ♖ac8 20 d6 exd6 21 exd6**

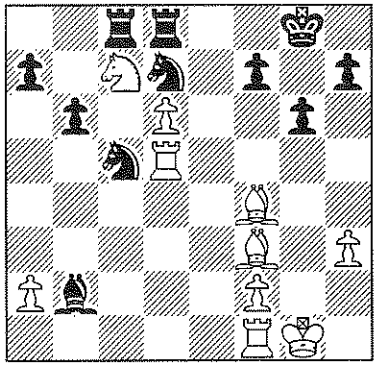
Not 21 ♖xd6? ♘cd7.' (Fischer) However, after 22 e6 ♖xc7 23 ♖xb6 ♘e5 24 ♖b3 fxe6 25 0-0 Black's extra pawn does not play any role. I would have preferred 21...♘bd7 22 ♘d5 ♗f8! (after 22...♔f8 23 ♘f6 ♗xf6 24 exf6 ♘e4 25 ♖d1 ♘dxf6 26 0-0 the two bishops give White counterplay) 23 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 24 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 25 exf6 ♗d6 26 ♗e3 b6 27 0-0 ♗e5 with a clear advantage for Black.

21...♗xb2 22 0-0 ♘bd7

In Botvinnik's opinion, it was safer to play 22...♘cd7 23 ♗f3 ♗e5 24 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 25 ♗xb7 ♖b8 'when White has only a minimal advantage' (which may come to nothing after 26 ♗g2 ♘bc4 27 ♖fe1 g5). But Fischer does not agree with this: 'Why should Black return the pawn?'

23 ♖d5! (23 ♘d5?! ♔g7) **23...b6 24 ♗f3?**

'There is nothing for the bishop to do here. By 24 ♗c4! (with the intention of ♖f1-e1-e7) White would have activated his pieces still further. Fischer thought that he could have forced a draw by playing 24...♘e6 25 ♗h2 ♘d4 (with the threat of ...♘f6) 26 ♖b1 ♗c3 27 ♖c1 ♗b2 etc. But stronger is 25 ♗g3! (25...♘d4 26 ♖d1).' (Botvinnik) To which the move 25...♘dc5 is correct, with an unclear game.



24...♘e6! 25 ♘xe6?

'This really took me aback. After 25 ♗e3 at least White's still in the game.' (Fischer) Although after 25...♘e5! White would also have been deprived of his outpost at c7 and would have lost quickly.

'I completely lost my head, thinking that 25 ♗h2 ♘d4 26 ♗g2 ♘f6 was even worse. But Geller pointed out 26 ♖xd4! ♗xd4 27 ♖e1 with a good game. Here too Fischer did not agree: he suggested 27...♗c5 (and then ...♘f6 or ...♘f8). But we too can continue the variation – 28 ♘d5.' (Botvinnik)

25...fxe6 26 ♖d3

Not 26 ♖d2? ♗c1 27 ♖d4 e5 or 26 ♖dd1? ♖f8! 27 ♗b7 (27 ♗g4? ♖xf4 28 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 and wins) 27...♖b8 28 ♗c6 ♖xf4 29 ♗xd7 ♔f7 30 ♖fe1 e5.

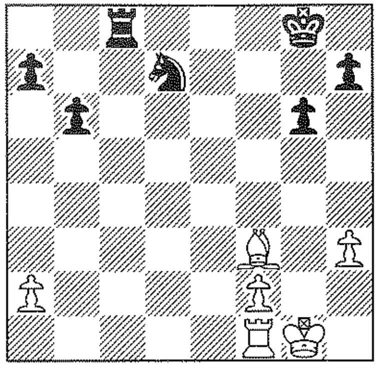
26...♘c5 27 ♖e3 (or 27 ♖d2 ♖f8 28 d7 ♖cd8) **27...e5!**

'I was hoping for 27...♗d4 28 ♖a3 e5 29 ♗g5 ♖xd6 30 ♗e7 ♖d7 31 ♗g4, whereas now Black eliminates White's passed pawn without loss of time and obtains a won ending.' (Botvinnik)

28 ♗xe5

'Just leads to a dead lost ending. I expected 28 ♖xe5!? (hopeless though it is).' (Fischer) And indeed, White's tactical chances are quickly exhausted: 28...♗xe5 29 ♗xe5 ♘d3 30 ♗d5+ ♔f8 31 f4 ♖c5 32 ♗b3 ♔e8, winning.

28...♗xe5 29 ♗xe5 ♖xd6 30 ♖e7 ♖d7 31 ♖xd7 (31 ♖fe1 ♖cc7!) **31...♘xd7**



32 ♗g4?! (Black has greater technical difficulties after 32 ♖e1 ♖c3 33 ♗d5+ ♔f8) **32...♖c7 33 ♖e1** (33 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 and wins) **33...♔f7 34 ♔g2** (slightly better was 34 ♗e6+ ♔f6 35 ♗d5 ♘e5) **34...♘c5 35 ♖e3 ♖e7 36 ♖f3+** (36 ♔f3 h5!) **36...♔g7 37 ♖c3 ♖e4 38 ♗d1 ♖d4**

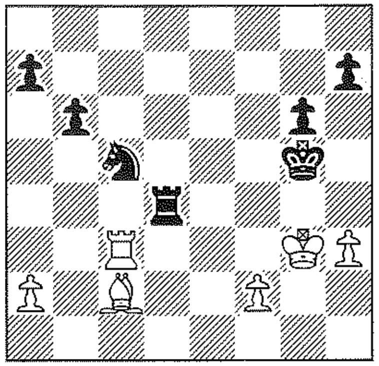
'Why did my opponent allow my bishop onto the favourable (and the only favourable!) position at c2. After all, by 38...♖e1! (39 ♗c2? ♖c1) he could have disorganised White's defences.' (Botvinnik) 'After 38...♖e1 simply 39 ♗f3 is more logical.' (Fischer)

39 ♗c2 ♔f6 40 ♔f3 ♔g5

'An endgame specialist of the class of Capablanca or Smyslov would have immediately transferred his king to d6, defending the knight, after which the advance of the queenside pawns would have decided the outcome.' (Botvinnik)

41 ♔g3

The turning point of the game.



41...♘e4+?!

'The defects in the character of my opponent begin to tell. Reckoning that the position was easily won, he was angry with me for playing on, and in his fervour, already after the time control, he takes a rash decision. By 41...♖b4 42 a3 ♖d4 43 f3 a5 Black would have won with the help of zugzwang: White's king has to guard the h4-square, his rook – c4 and his bishop – d1. As for the resulting rook ending, it is very significant that Black has worsened the position of his king.' (Botvinnik)

42 ♗xe4 ♖xe4

'I was not in a hurry to adjourn the game, since I thought that, in such a position, further play at the board gave more chances of drawing than after home analysis. And Fischer's entire behaviour expressed his indignation at White continuing to resist in this "hopeless" position. He clearly wanted to demonstrate both to the players in the Olympiad, and to the spectators, that such a position did not require any analysis.' (Botvinnik)

43 ♖a3

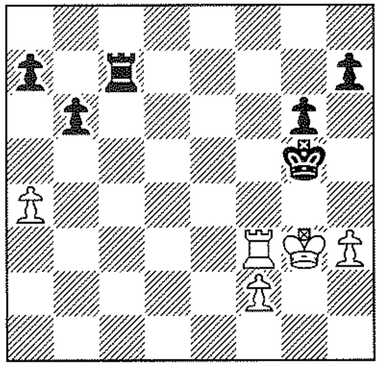
From what follows it is evident that 43 ♖c7!? ♖a4 44 ♖xh7 came into consideration, although after 44...♖a3+! 45 f3 (or 45 ♔g2 ♖xa2 46 ♖b7 ♖a1 47 ♔f3 ♔f5 48 ♖f7+ ♔e5 49 ♖g7 b5) 45...♖xa2 46 h4+ ♔f5 47 ♖f7+ ♔e5 48 ♖g7 ♖a1 White apparently cannot save the game.

43...♖e7?!

43...a5! 44 ♖b3 ♖b4 was decisive, since, as pointed out by Botvinnik, 45 ♖xb4 axb4 46 f4+ ♔f5 47 ♔f3 ♔e6 48 ♔e4 (48 ♔g4 h6) 48...♔d6 49 ♔d4 b5 50 ♔d3 ♔d5 is hopeless for White.

44 ♖f3 ♖c7 (in the opinion of both players, 44...♔h6!? and 45...♔g7 would have retained winning chances) **45 a4**

Finally the time for play had expired, and Fischer had to seal his move.



'After dinner I began my night-time analysis, one of the most prolonged in my career. 45...♖c4 did not concern me, on account of the immediate 46 a5! bxa5 (or 46...b5 47 ♖f7 a6 48 h4+ ♔h6 49 ♖d7) 47 ♖f7 a6 48 h4+ ♔h6 49 ♖d7, nor did 45...♔h6 46 ♖d3! ♖c5 47 h4 ♖a5 48 ♖d4 with a draw. But what was White to do after 45...♖c5 here? The future appeared gloomy, until Geller found the unique idea of counterplay with 46 ♖f7 ♖a5 47 ♖xh7!! When deep into the night he left me, it only remained to work out the details of this find... Incidentally, the idea itself was found amazingly quickly by Geller in the restaurant during dinner, but its "implementation" proved to be a very troublesome matter. Only by three in the morning was a logical continuation found for Black, and at 4.30 – a cunning pawn sacrifice, the only way for White to save the game. Only at 5.30 did the team captain Furman leave me...' (Botvinnik)

'For me the most memorable event of the Olympiad was the resumption of the Botvinnik-Fischer game. For this game chess fans gathered from literally all over Bulgaria. Everyone remembered the recent interview given by Fischer, in which he had said that he could beat Botvinnik in a match, and the game therefore held exceptional prestige interest.... Three of us – Boleslavsky, Spassky and I – set up Botvinnik's position in our room, and got down to analysing it. The analysis went on for almost the whole of the night. We three were below, while Botvinnik, Geller, Keres and Furman worked together on the floor above. From time to time the younger players – Spassky and I – would take turns to go upstairs and exchange conclusions. Towards five o'clock in the morning Geller's fantastic idea – to battle with two isolated pawns against two connected pawns in a rook ending – had been fully worked out, and we decided that there were considerable drawing chances.' (Tal)

'The game was officially "drawn" at breakfast. The Russian team had a table near the American team. Someone inquired of Botvinnik what he thought of the adjourned position. Hardly looking up from his plate, the world champion shrugged, "Nichia" (draw). The word quickly spread, and I overheard someone at the English table saying: "The Russians said Fischer could have won before adjournment"...' (Fischer)

And so, the time of the resumption arrived. The arbiter L.Boneva opened the envelope and made Black's move:

45...♖c5!

'Since Fischer had not yet appeared (as usual he was late), the arbiter invited me, in accordance with the rules, to write the next move on my score-sheet, without making it on the board, and to start Black's clock. Soon Fischer appeared in the hall. Staring at the board in surprise, he noticed that White's move had not been made but that Black's clock was going and, annoyed, he bashed the button to start White's clock. Boneva calmly put the clock back, showed Fischer the move written on White's score-sheet, and the adjournment session began.' (Botvinnik)

46 ♖f7 ♖a5 47 ♖xh7!!

'I overlooked this defence.' (Fischer) 'There is nothing surprising about this: after the game it transpired that during the night my opponent had slept soundly. In addition, the decision to allow the opponent two connected passed pawns looks extremely paradoxical.' (Botvinnik) It is hopeless to play 47 ♖f4 ♖f5 48 ♖c4 ♖f7 followed by the march of the king to the queenside.

47...♖xa4 48 h4+!

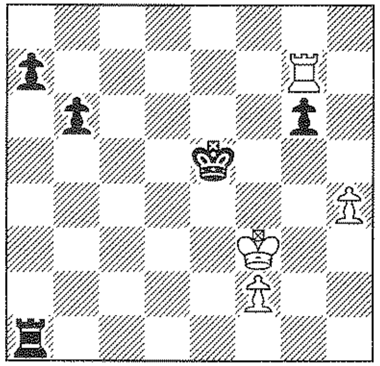
'I had analyzed mainly 48 f4, but Botvinnik's line is best and also contains a sly trap.' (Fischer)

48...♔f5

'After 48...♔f6 49 ♖b7! ♖a5 50 ♔g4 b5 51 f4 a6 52 ♖b6+ ♔f7 53 ♖b7+ White is completely safe.' (Botvinnik)

49 ♖f7+ ♔e5 50 ♖g7 (White's chance is associated with the weakness of the a7- and g6-pawns) **50...♖a1 51 ♔f3!**

If 51 ♔g2, then 51...♔f5.



51...b5? 52 h5!

'Here my opponent turned pale and thought for a long time. The surprising thing about this move is that White does not pick up the undefended g6-pawn (52 ♖xg6? ♔d4, winning), but temporarily sacrifices another pawn himself. Bobby admitted that he had overlooked this reply – a very rare occurrence for him. After this move I could not restrain myself and, going up to our captain Lev Abramov, I said one word to him: "Draw". Fischer rushed up to the arbiter

Boneva and protested that Botvinnik was being prompted...' (Botvinnik)

52...♖a3+ 53 ♔g2 gxh5 54 ♖g5+ ♔d6 55 ♖xb5

The ending is a theoretical draw. 'Botvinnik visibly relaxed. I had played right into his hands.' (Fischer)

55...h4 56 f4 ♔c6 57 ♖b8! h3+ 58 ♔h2 a5 59 f5 ♔c7 60 ♖b5 ♔d6 61 f6 ♔e6 62 ♖b6+ ♔f7 63 ♖a6 ♔g6 64 ♖c6 a4 65 ♖a6 ♔f7 66 ♖c6 ♖d3 67 ♖a6 a3 68 ♔g1 ½-½

'With a face as white as a sheet, Fischer shook my hand and left the hall with tears in his eyes.' (Botvinnik)

Bobby was so vexed by this draw, that in the last-round match with Yugoslavia he lost an overwhelming position against Gligoric, and the USA finished outside the medals...

But could he have won against Botvinnik, if he hadn't made a mistake on the 51st move? Let us return to the position in the last diagram. The Americans claimed that 51...♔d5!? would have won. 'Roughly a week later (the final analysis was made in an aeroplane with the participation of Keres, Spassky, Tal and Furman) it was established,' writes Botvinnik, 'that after 52 ♖xg6 b5 53 ♔e3 (also possible is 53 ♔e2 ♔c4 54 h5 b4 55 ♖g4+ ♔b5 56 ♔d3 or 55...♔c3 56 ♖h4 and h5-h6-h7) 53...a5 54 ♔d3 ♖a3+ 55 ♔c2 ♖a2+ 56 ♔c3 ♖xf2 57 ♖g5+ ♔c6 58 ♖g6+ ♔d7 59 ♖g7+ ♔e6 60 ♖a7 White should nevertheless make a draw. But soon I received an unexpected blow from Dr Euwe – he asked me: "But how do you make a draw in the event of 51...♔d4 instead? After all, then the manoeuvre of the white king to the queenside is not possible." Was the adjourned position really lost? Was I really mistaken in my evaluation of the position? Or was Geller's brilliant idea incorrect?'

And yet after **51...♔d4!** Mikhail Moiseevich found a way to save the game: **52 ♖xg6 b5 53 h5 b4 54 h6!**

It is insufficient to play 54 ♔g2 b3 55 h6 b2 56 h7 ♖h1! 57 ♔xh1 b1♕+ 58 ♔h2 ♕b8+ 59 ♔g1 ♕e5! and wins (Fischer). 54 ♖g4+ ♔c3 55 ♖h4 ♖g1 56 h6 ♖g8 57 h7 ♖h8 58 ♔e2 b3 59 ♔d1 ♔b2 is also in Black's favour.

54...b3 (or 54...♖h1 55 ♔g2! ♖h5 56 ♖a6 b3 57 ♖xa7 ♖xh6 58 ♖b7 ♔c4 59 ♔f3 with a theoretical draw) **55 ♖g4+!** (55 h7? ♖h1 56 ♖g7 a5 and wins) **55...♔c5! 56 ♖g5+ ♔c6!**

If 56...♔b4, then 57 ♖g7! b2 58 h7 ♖h1! 59 ♖xa7! ♔b3 60 ♖b7+ ♔c2 61 ♖c7+ ♔d2 62 ♖b7 with a draw (Fischer).

57 ♖g6+ ♔b7! 58 ♖g7+ (58 ♖g4? a5) **58...♔a6! 59 ♖g6+** (59 ♔g2? b2 60 h7 b1♕ 61 h8♕ ♕e4+!) **59...♔a5! 60 ♖g5+**

60 ♖g7? b2 61 ♖xa7+ ♔b6 is bad, but the computer suggests 60 h7!? ♖h1 61 ♖g7 ♔b6 62 ♔g2 ♖h5 63 ♖g3 or 61...a6 62 ♖b7 ♔a4 63 ♔g2 ♖h5 64 f4 ♔a3 (64...a5 65 f5) 65 ♖a7 with a draw.

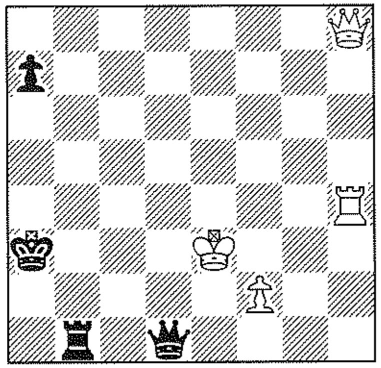
60...♔a4! 61 ♖g4+!

Interesting is 61 ♖h5!? (61 ♖g7? a5) 61...b2 62 h7 b1♕ 63 h8♕ ♕d3+ 64 ♔f4 ♖e1! 65 ♕h7! (but not 65 ♖e5? ♕d4+ 66 ♔f5 ♕xf2+ 67 ♔e6 ♕b6+ when Black wins). (Botvinnik)

61...♔a3 62 ♖h4 b2 63 h7 b1♕ 64 h8♕

'and Black cannot win, since his rook is restricted by his king.'

The implacable Fischer continued this analysis in his book *My 60 Memorable Games* (1969): **64...♕b3+! 65 ♔e2** (65 ♔f4 ♕f7+; 65 ♔g2 ♕d5+ 66 f3 ♕d2+) **65...♕d1+ 66 ♔e3 ♖b1!**



Analysis diagram

Fischer's conclusion: after **67 ♕f8+** (not 67 ♕c3+? ♖b3 or 67 ♖h3 ♔a2! 68 ♕g8+ ♕b3+) **67...♔a2** 'White's king will be without shelter from the coming avalanche of checks.'

However, it was Botvinnik who had the last word: 'Here there are straight away two mistakes. First of all, as I established, after **68 ♕c5** White can successfully defend. This was later demonstrated in detail by the Moscow master Anatoly Kremenetsky in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1977, No.2). And the 13-year-old Garry Kasparov (*at one of the sessions of the Botvinnik School – G.K.*) found an elegant way to draw in the diagram position: **67 ♖c4! ♖b3+ 68 ♖c3 ♕e1+ 69 ♔d3 ♕f1+ 70 ♔d2** (70 ♔e3? ♕h3+!) **70...♕xf2+ 71 ♔d3**. This, it would seem, put an end to the lengthy arguments involving our game.'

This famous ending had an amazing effect on the chess world. Fischer's prestige was so great, that in the West there was talk about a special, non-scheduled match for the world championship with Botvinnik. But after this missed win Bobby lost part of his halo and... disappeared from the chess stage for three whole years.

In 1964 he published some interesting comments: 'The ten greatest masters in the history of chess,' and this ten (Morphy, Staunton, Steinitz, Tarrasch, Chigorin, Alekhine, Capablanca, Spassky, Tal and Reshevsky) did not include Lasker or Botvinnik! True, in an appearance on Yugoslav television after the 'match of the century' in 1970, Fischer nevertheless gave the sixth champion his due. To the question of what quality in Botvinnik attracted him most, Bobby replied: 'His self-discipline. He became a lesson in how to avoid superficiality. I am also impressed by his composure and iron logic.'

At that same time, in the spring of 1970, a unique 'friendly' match between Botvinnik and Fischer could have taken place, timed to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Leiden Chess Club. The Dutch held persistent discussions with the former and future world champions, but alas... When everything had been agreed (it was proposed to play a match of 18 games) Fischer demanded that there should be an unlimited number of games and refused to sign the contract...

Autumn of the Patriarch

After losing the match in 1963 to Petrosian and no longer having the right to a return match (by that time FIDE had abolished them), the 52-year-old Botvinnik decided to opt out of the battle for the world championship. He was fascinated by the idea of creating an ultra-powerful computer chess program, and in addition he was director of a junior chess school, which gained world renown as the 'Botvinnik School' (those who studied in it at various times included Karpov, and me, and Kramnik, and many other future grandmasters and masters). And he continued to play occasionally in tournaments, roughly twice a year.

During the last World Olympiad in his chess career (Tel Aviv 1964) where the ex-world champion made the best result on board 2, he was asked what nationality he considered himself to be. 'Yes, my position is "complicated",' Botvinnik replied. 'By blood I am Jewish, by culture – Russian, and by education – Soviet...'

One remembers his phenomenal start in the 1966 USSR Team Cup: five successive wins, against opponents including Smyslov, Keres (*Game No.47*) and Spassky, who had just shown that he was the equal of Petrosian in a match for the world crown and had brilliantly won the super-tournament in Santa Monica.

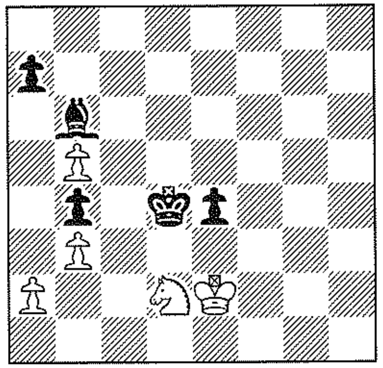
Botvinnik's introduction to the following game gives an impression of his character and distinctive sense of humour: 'There are, of course, always two participants in a match for the world championship: the champion, and the challenger. One has been victorious in a match, while the other has overcome all the grandmasters in the qualifying competitions. It is the dream of every player to meet them at the chessboard, and this is what happened with me in the USSR Team Championship. I will give one of these games. In the second, with world champion Petrosian (on the 11th day of uninterrupted battles), I had even more grounds for winning... however I made an oversight. And so, here is my encounter with the challenger.'

Game 78

B.Spassky-M.Botvinnik

USSR Team Cup, Moscow 1966

The game was adjourned in a bishop against knight endgame that was slightly better for Botvinnik, where Black was aiming to activate his king, and White to create an impregnable fortress. During the resumption, after lengthy manoeuvres, the position in the diagram was reached:



62 ♘c4?

'This ill-fated move leads to defeat. After 62 ♘f1 ♔c3 63 ♘g3 ♔b2 64 ♔d1! ♔xa2 65 ♔c2 e3 66 ♘e2 the b5-pawn would have saved White, since Black does not have ...a7-a5-a4. But now from c4 the knight will no longer be able to return to e2, and the game is decided.' (Botvinnik)

62...♔c3 63 ♔d1 ♗d4 (with the threat of 64...♔d3) **64 ♔e2 e3**

Now ...♔c2-b1xa2 is on the agenda.

65 ♘a5

The pawn endgame after 65 ♘xe3 ♗xe3 66 ♔xe3 ♔b2 67 ♔d3 ♔xa2 68 ♔c4 ♔a3 is also hopeless.

65...♔b2 66 ♘c6 ♗c5 67 ♘e5 ♔xa2 68 ♘d3 ♗e7 0-1

69 ♘c1+ (69 ♔xe3 ♔xb3) 69...♔b2 70 ♔d1 ♗d8 and wins.

Apart from Botvinnik's competitive successes in his later period, he also had some impressive creative achievements.

Game 79

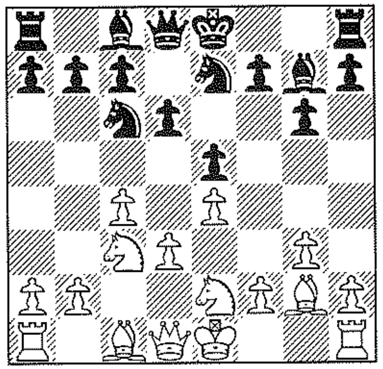
P.Benko-M.Botvinnik

Monte Carlo 1968, 6th round
English Opening A26

1 c4 g6 2 g3 ♗g7 3 ♗g2 e5 4 ♘c3 ♘e7 5 e4 d6 6 ♘ge2 ♘bc6

Botvinnik is playing against... Botvinnik: in the 15th game of the 1954 match after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 d6 6 ♘ge2 he replied 6...e5! and 7...♘ge7 (*Game No.107*), then he successfully employed this set-up as White, and now he is even prepared to uphold 'Smyslov's position' a tempo down!

7 d3



7...f5

A more common alternative is 7...0-0 (7...♗e6?! 8 ♘d5 0-0 9 h4!) 8 0-0 (8 h4 ♘d4!), and now after 8...♘d4 9 ♘xd4 exd4 10 ♘e2 c6 11 b4 (Portisch-Smyslov, Monte Carlo 1968) or 8...♗d7 9 ♘d5 ♖b8 10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗e3 f5 12 ♕d2 ♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘d4 14 ♘xd4 exd4 15 ♗g5 (Botvinnik-Spassky, Leiden 1970) White has some advantage. 8...♗e6 is more natural, for example:

1) 9 ♘d5 ♕d7 10 ♗e3 ♘d4?! (10...♔h8? 11 d4!) 11 ♘xd4 exd4 12 ♗h6 c5 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕d2 ♘xd5 15 cxd5 ♗h3 16 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 17 f4 with a positional advantage for White (Botvinnik-Geller, Moscow 1966); therefore 10...f5 is better, transposing into the commentary game;

2) 9 h3 ♕d7 10 ♔h2 f5 11 ♘d5 ♖f7! 12 ♗e3 ♖af8 13 f4 ♘d4 14 ♘xd4 exd4 15 ♗d2 ♘c8! (following Botvinnik!) 16 ♕f3 c6 17 b3 g5! 18 ♕h5 fxe4 19 dxe4 gxf4 20 gxf4 cxd5 21 cxd5 ♕b5 22 a4 ♕xb3 23 ♖fb1 ♕c4 24 ♖c1 ♕b3 25 ♖cb1 ♕c4 26 ♖c1 ½-½ (Hort-Spassky, Reykjavik 4th matchgame 1977).

8 ♘d5

8 ♗e3 ♘d4 is satisfactory for Black. Instead 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘d5 leads to a position from the game Botvinnik-Petrosian (Moscow 1966), where after 9...♔h8?! 10 ♗e3 ♗e6 11 ♕d2 ♕d7 12 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 13 f4! White seized the initiative. Black also fails to equalise by 9...fxe4?! 10 dxe4 ♗g4 11 f3 ♗e6 12 ♗e3 ♕d7 13 ♕d2 ♖f7 14 ♖ad1 (Benko-Evans, New York 1966/67), but 9...♘xd5 10 cxd5 ♘e7 or 9...h6 will do, since the attack with queenside castling is no longer threatened.

8...0-0 9 ♗e3 ♗e6

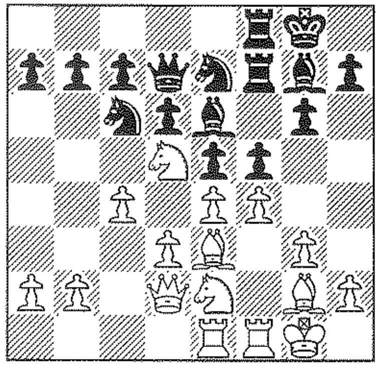
The start of a textbook mobilisation plan. It is dangerous to play 9...h6?! 10 ♕d2 g5 (10...♔h7 11 0-0-0!?) 11 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 12 f4! gxf4 13 gxf4 ♘g6 14 0-0-0 with the initiative (D.Byrne-Benko, New York 1966/67).

10 ♕d2 ♕d7 11 0-0 ♖f7! (this is more purposeful and accurate than 11...♖ae8?!) **12 ♖ae1**

12 ♘xe7+?! ♖xe7 13 ♘c3 ♖f8 14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♖ae1 ♗h3 (Filip-Geller, Curaçao Candidates 1962) is unsuccessful. Nowadays 12 ♖ac1 ♖af8 13 f3!? or 13 b4!? is preferred.

12...♖af8! 13 f4

I don't know whether White should play this, if there is a choice between the solid 13 f3!? ♔h8 14 b3 ♘g8 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 d4 ♗h3 17 ♘dc3 (Smejkal-Yusupov, Germany 1992) and 13 b4!? f4!? 14 gxf4 ♗h3 15 f3 ♗xg2 16 ♔xg2 ♘d4 with sharp play.



13...fxe4!

Of course, not 13...♘d4? 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♘xd4 exd4 16 ♗g5! (Schmidt-Ribli, Leipzig 1973). Black's deep plan, in Botvinnik's words, is not without its positional novelty and psychological elements:

'First Black exchanges pawns on e4 (White is forced to recapture 14 dxe4, so as not to allow 14...♘f5), and then the light-squared bishops, in order to weaken the e4-pawn and the position of the white king, and finally he exchanges pawns on f4, enabling him to attack the e4-pawn along the file (White will be forced to recapture g3xf4, in order to control the e5-square). After ...♖e8 White will probably play ♘g3, after which the black h-pawn will advance, accentuating the weakness of the e4-pawn and the open position of the white king.'

14 dxe4 ♘c8!

The key manoeuvre! 'By defending the c7-pawn with his rook, Black gains the opportunity to exchange the light-squared bishops.' (Botvinnik) However, according to Dvoretsky, 14...exf4!? 15 gxf4 ♗h3 would also have worked, and if 16 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 17 ♘xc7, then 17...♘e5! 18 b3! (18 ♘g3?! ♘xc4 19 ♘d3 ♘xe3) 18...♘f3+ 19 ♖xf3 ♕xf3 20 ♘g3 ♖xf4!? 21 ♗xf4 ♗c3 22 ♖f1 ♗xd2 23 ♖xf3 ♖xf4. Or 15 ♘exf4 ♘e5 16 ♘xe6 (16 b3!?) 16...♖xf1+ 17 ♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 18 ♔xf1 ♘xc4 19

♕c1 ♘xe3+ 20 ♘xe3 ♕xe6 21 ♕xc7, in each case with equality.

15 c5

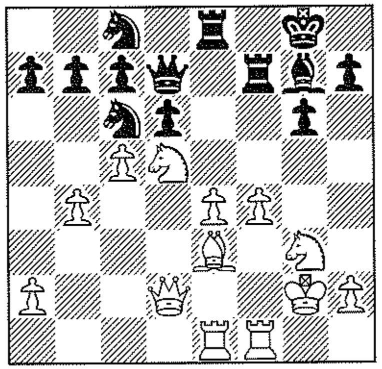
White could have considered 15 b4!? ♗h3 16 b5 ♗xg2 17 bxc6! (17 ♔xg2 exf4! 18 gxf4 ♘d8 is weaker) 17...bxc6 (17...♕h3 18 ♖f2 ♗xe4 19 cxb7 ♘b6 20 ♗xb6 and ♘ec3) 18 ♔xg2 cxd5 with a roughly equal game (Dvoretsky).

15...♗h3 16 b4 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 exf4 18 gxf4

18 ♗xf4 ♘e5 is too depressing, whereas the hanging pawns, although they are under constant pressure, give White chances of active counterplay.

18...♖e8! 19 ♘g3?!

'The psychological part of the plan also justifies itself: in defending the pawn, White aims simultaneously to cover his king's position, but 19 ♘ec3 was probably stronger.' (Botvinnik) I agree that here Benko could even have fought for the initiative, but the move he made by no means loses.



19...h5! (highly dynamic play: one senses the contemporary trends of the 1960s!) **20 b5**

'After 20 h4 (safeguarding the knight at g3) the h4-pawn would need defending. If 20 f5, then 20...h4 21 fxg6 (21 f6 ♗h8) 21...♖xf1 22 ♖xf1 hxg3 23 ♖f7 ♕g4 24 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 25 ♗h6+ ♔xg6 and wins.' (Botvinnik)

It was hardly any better to play 20 cxd6 cxd6! (but not 20...h4? because of 21 ♘xc7 hxg3 22 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 23 b5 ♕xe4+? 24 ♔xg3 and not 20...♘xd6?! 21 e5 ♘c4 22 ♕d3) 21 b5 ♘6e7 22 ♔h1 h4 23 ♘e2 ♘xd5 24 ♕xd5 ♕e6, when all the same the white king is uncomfortable.

20...♘6e7

According to Botvinnik, 'Perhaps 20...♘d8 (defending f7) would have been more circumspect.' But I don't like this retreat on account of 21 ♗d4 with good prospects for White.

21 f5!

Benko rises to the occasion: complications are his only chance. After 21 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 22 cxd6 cxd6 23 ♗d4 ♗xd4 24 ♕xd4 h4! 25 ♘e2 ♕xb5 26 ♕xa7 d5 White's position could have become unpleasant.

21...h4 22 fxg6!

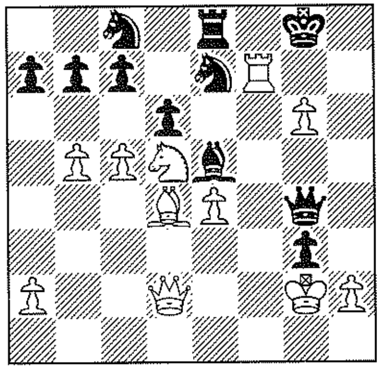
A piece sacrifice! In the event of 22 f6 ♘xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♖e5 24 ♕xb7 ♗xf6 25 ♗d4 hxg3 26 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 27 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 Black has a big advantage.

22...♖xf1 23 ♖xf1 hxg3 24 ♖f7 (24 ♗h6 ♕e6!) **24...♗e5!**

If 24...♕e6? White would have won by 25 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 26 ♗d4+ ♔g8 27 ♘f6+. Or 24...♕g4? 25 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 26 ♕d4+ ♔xg6 27 ♕f6+ ♔h7 28 ♕f7+ ♕g7 29 ♘f6+ and mate in two moves.

25 ♗d4 ♕g4!

The turning point of the game, in which both sides have played brilliantly up till now.



26 ♖f4?

'Of course, stronger was 26 ♗xe5 gxh2+ (26...♕xe4+? 27 ♔h3) 27 ♗g3! (27 ♔xh2? ♕h5+! and 28...♕xg6+), but even so after 27...♕xe4+ 28 ♔xh2 ♕xg6 (if 28...♕xd5? 29 ♕h6 or 28...♘xd5 29 ♕h6, *but 29...♕e2+ 30 ♔h3 ♕e6+ with perpetual check – G.K.*) 29 ♘xe7+ (*29 ♖xe7?! ♘xe7 30 ♘xc7 ♖d8 31 cxd6 ♘f5 is bad – G.K.*) 29...♖xe7! (*29...♘xe7 30 ♖f4 ♕h5+ 31 ♖h4 ♕xc5 32 ♕e2! ♔g7 33 ♖g4+ ♔f7 34 ♖f4+ ♔g7 with equality – G.K.*) 30 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 31 cxd6 ♘f5 32 ♕d5+ ♔f8 White is a pawn down, and he has a difficult task to draw.' (Botvinnik)

Difficult, but possible, for example: 33 ♗f2 ♕xd6+ 34 ♕xd6+ ♘xd6 35 a4 a6 36 bxa6 bxa6 37 ♔g2 ♔f7 38 ♔f3 ♔e6 39 ♔e3 ♔d5 40 ♔d3 ♘e4 41 ♗e1! (if 41 ♗g1? ♘c5+ 42 ♔c3, then not 42...♘xa4+ 43 ♔b4 with a draw, but 42...a5! 43 ♗h2 ♘xa4+ 44 ♔b3 ♘c5+, winning) 41...♘c5+ 42 ♔c3 ♘xa4+ 43 ♔b4 ♘c5 44 ♗g3 c6 45 ♔a5 and it is nevertheless a draw!

In addition, instead of 32 ♕d5+?! it is simpler to play 32 ♕c3! when Black has altogether no chances of winning: 32...♕h5+ (32...cxd6 33 ♕c8+) 33 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 34 ♗f2 with a draw (34...♕g4+ 35 ♔h2). Therefore it has to be acknowledged that 26 ♖f4? was the decisive mistake in a sharp, still roughly equal position.

26...♕h5 27 ♗xe5 (or 27 hxg3 ♘xd5 with an extra piece) **27...♕xh2+ 28 ♔f3 ♕xd2 29 ♘f6+ ♔g7 30 ♘xe8+ ♔xg6 31 ♖f6+ ♔h7 32 ♗xg3** (after 32 ♖f7+ ♔g8 33 ♖g7+ ♔f8 the checks come to an end) **32...♕d3+ 33 ♔f2 ♕xb5 34 cxd6 ♕xe8 0-1**

A very important and interesting game, typical of Botvinnik's playing style. He used to think in plans (cf. the note to Black's 13th move), carrying them out with iron consistency – as, say, in the opening game of the 1958 return match with Smyslov (*Game No.72*). When Botvinnik knew what he was doing, it was impossible to resist against him: he would crush his opponent like a steamroller!

After this the patriarch of world chess clearly began to enjoy himself and in the very next round he won a spectacular game in the style of the old masters, which was later judged by the experts to be the best in the fifth volume of *Informator*.

Game 80

M.Botvinnik-L.Portisch

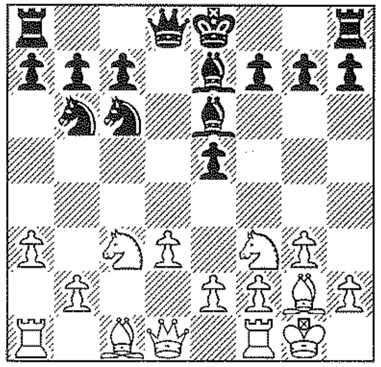
Monte Carlo 1968, 7th round

English Opening A29

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♗g2 ♗e6

In the game Botvinnik-Duckstein (Munich Olympiad 1958) after 5...♘b6 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 a3 ♗e7 8 d3 0-0 (8...a5!?) White decided to defer castling, and very successfully: 9 b4 f5 10 b5 ♘d4 11 ♘xe5 ♗f6 12 f4 ♗e6 13 ♖b1 ♗xe5 14 fxe5 f4!? 15 0-0! f3? (15...fxg3 16 hxg3 ♖xf1+ 17 ♕xf1 ♘d5 was essential) 16 exf3 ♘xf3+ 17 ♖xf3 ♕d4+ 18 ♖e3!! ♕xc3 19 d4 with a winning position.

6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 0-0 ♘b6 (but not 7...♗e7?! 8 d4!) **8 d3 ♗e7 9 a3**



9...a5?!

Nowadays this is considered to be weakening. Instead 9...f5 10 b4 ♗f6 11 ♗d2! 0-0 (11...e4?! 12 dxe4 fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♗xa1 14 ♕xa1 with splendid compensation for the exchange) 12 ♖c1 ♔h8 (or 12...♘d4 13 ♘xd4 exd4 14 ♘a4) 13 b5 ♘a5 14 ♖b1 e4 15 ♘e1! (Botvinnik-Lundin, Stockholm 1962) is also insufficient.

A sound alternative is 9...0-0 10 b4 ♘d4! 11 ♗b2 ♘xf3+ (it is weaker to play 11...♗b3?! 12 ♕c1 c5 13 bxc5 ♗xc5 14 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♗xb7! Kasparov-A.Sokolov, 55th USSR Championship, Moscow 1988) 12 ♗xf3 c6 13 ♘e4 ♘d7! 14 ♕c2 ♗d5 15 ♘d2 ♗xf3 16 ♘xf3 ♗d6 (Kasparov-Salov, 55th USSR Championship, Moscow 1988) or 15 ♗c3 ♖c8 16 ♕b2 ♖e8 17 ♗g4 ♖c7 18 f4 ♗xe4 19 dxe4 ♗f6 20 ♖ad1 ♕e7 (M.Gurevich-Shirov, Sarajevo 2000) with equality in each instance.

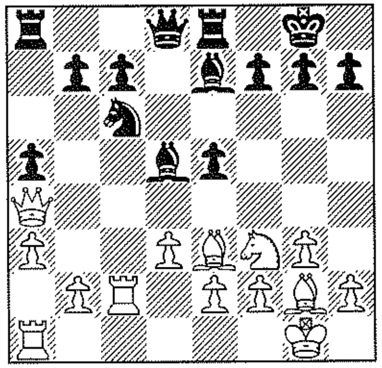
10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♘a4

'White carries out a typical manoeuvre in such positions, with the aim of opening the c-file and in due time occupying c5 with a minor piece.' (Botvinnik)

11...♘xa4

It is more interesting to play 11...♘d5 12 ♗c5 ♗d6 (12...b6!? 13 ♗xe7 ♘dxe7 14 b4 axb4 15 axb4 ♕d6 has also been played) 13 ♖c1 h6 14 d4! with the initiative (Kasparov-Kir.Georgiev, Saint John 3rd blitz game 1988). Now, however, White has an ultra-favourable version of the 'Dragon' with reversed colours.

12 ♕xa4 ♗d5 (12...♕d7 13 ♖fc1!) **13 ♖fc1 ♖e8 14 ♖c2**



14...♗f8?!

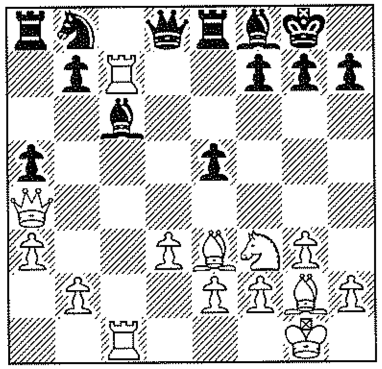
'Complacency. As was pointed out by Smyslov immediately after the game, Black could have successfully defended with 14...♗d6! 15 ♕b5 ♘e7.' (Botvinnik) However, 16 ♘d2 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 would have left White with some advantage.

15 ♖ac1 ♘b8?

Portisch wanted to play 16...c6, thinking his c7-pawn to be immune, but he overlooked White's brilliant 17th move. It was better to play 15...e4 16 dxe4 ♗xe4 (16...♖xe4?! 17 ♕b5!) 17 ♖d2 ♗d6 18 ♗c5 (18 ♖c4 ♕e7) 18...♕e7(f6) 19 ♗xd6 cxd6. Botvinnik considered 17...♕f6 18 ♗f4 ♖ac8, 'parrying the immediate threats', but after 19 ♗h3! ♗f5 20 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 21 ♕b3 Black loses a pawn (Nunn). Therefore 18...♗d6 19 ♗xd6 cxd6 is more solid, but on the other hand White has the improvement 18 ♖c4! ♗f5 19 ♘h4 (19 ♕b5!?) 19...♗e6 20 ♖f4 with pressure.

16 ♖xc7 ♗c6

So, the rook is trapped, but... long live the seventh rank!



17 ♖1xc6! bxc6 18 ♖xf7!

'Rarely almost in the opening is it possible to give up both rooks, one after the other. True, the second sacrifice cannot be accepted: 18...♔xf7? 19 ♕c4+ ♔g6 20 ♕g4+ ♔f7 21 ♘g5+ and Black has to part with his queen, otherwise he is mated.' (Botvinnik)

18...h6 (a forced weakening) **19 ♖b7 ♕c8 20 ♕c4+ ♔h8** (20...♕e6 21 ♘xe5, winning) **21 ♘h4!**

A spectacular concluding blow, exploiting the weakness of the light squares. 21 ♖f7 was far more prosaic.

21...♕xb7 22 ♘g6+ ♔h7 23 ♗e4 (with the threat of 24 ♘e7+ and 25 ♕g8 mate) **23...♗d6 24 ♘xe5+ g6** (or 24...♔h8 25 ♘f7+ ♔g8 26 ♘xd6+) **25 ♗xg6+ ♔g7 26 ♗xh6+! 1-0**

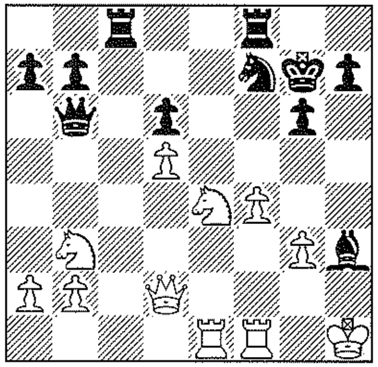
In view of 26...♔xh6 27 ♕h4+ ♔g7 28 ♕h7+.

In the example below Botvinnik missed an amazing possibility and then lamented his 'old illness – inadequate combinative vision.' But, as was discovered with the help of a computer, he actually played correctly!

Game 81

M.Botvinnik-D.Suttles

Belgrade 1969



24 ♘d4! ♖fe8

24...♗xf1? loses to 25 ♘e6+ ♔h8 26 ♘xf8 ♗b5 (26...♖xf8 27 ♕c3+) 27 a4 ♗xa4 28 b3 or 25...♔g8 26 ♘f6+ ♔h8 27 ♘d7.

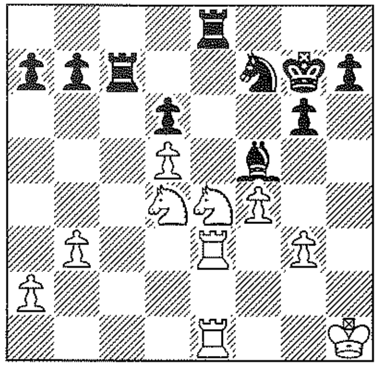
25 ♖f3

But not 25 f5? ♖xe4! 'The previous variation should have suggested to me that it was not essential to waste time moving the rook. The problem would have been solved by the pretty, "quiet" move 25 b3!! If 25...♗xf1, then the next move is also a spectacular one – 26 ♕b2! After 26...♔f8 27 ♘e6+ ♖xe6 28 dxe6 Black would have to resign (28...♕b4 29 ♕f6 ♖c7 30 exf7 ♕xe1 31 ♕d8+ ♔xf7 32 ♘g5+ with inevitable mate). And in the event of 25...♖xe4 26 ♖xe4 ♗xf1 White wins easily by 27 ♘e6+ ♔g8 28 ♕b2 ♘e5 29 ♖xe5 (*but not 29 fxe5? ♗d3 and Black wins – G.K.*) 29...dxe5 30 ♕xe5 ♖c7 31 ♕xc7 ♕xc7 32 ♘xc7 ♔f7 33 d6 ♔f6 34 ♔g1 ♗h3 35 ♔f2.' (Botvinnik)

However, in this last variation the machine instantly points out 30...♔f7! (instead of 30...♖c7?), and White is obliged to force a draw: 31 ♘g5+ ♔g8 32 ♘e6.

25...♖c4 26 ♖d3 ♕b4?! (26...♗f5 was better) **27 b3 ♕xd2 28 ♖xd2 ♖c7 29 ♖de2 ♗g4** (29...♖ce7? 30 ♘xd6!) **30 ♖e3 ♗f5?**

30...♗d7 was essential.

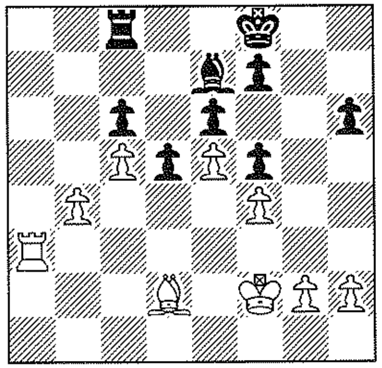


31 ♘xd6! ♘xd6 32 ♘xf5+ gxf5 33 ♖xe8 ♘xe8 34 ♖xe8 ♔g6 35 ♖e2! ♖c1+ 36 ♔g2 ♖d1 37 ♖e6+ ♔f7 (or 37...♔h5 38 ♖e7) **38 ♖d6! ♔e7 39 ♖h6 ♖xd5 40 ♖xh7+ ♔d6 41 ♔h3** and White won.

'Botvinnik's modest manners, his accuracy in everything and his marked desire to live like everyone else, suggested a routine and false conclusion – that he was merely a hard-worker who performed the ideas of others. Sometimes this image lulled the vigilance of his opponents, although they should have known better than the rest the worth of this outward modesty,' recalls M.Beilin, who was then head of the chess section of the Sports Committee. 'Both Botvinnik's behaviour and his modesty came rather from his upbringing. But he undoubtedly knew his own worth. On one occasion he declined to play in an international tournament, stating that he had not been properly invited. I retorted that I had sent him an invitation as I had to everyone, to all the other grandmasters. To which there followed a short and convincing reply: "I am not everyone. I am Botvinnik." This sense of his own value was in his blood.'

In 1970 Botvinnik played on board 8 in the 'match of the century' – USSR against the rest of the world, confidently defeating Matulovic (2½-1½). And he concluded his playing days with a four-man match-tournament in Leiden, where he gained four draws with the reigning world champion Spassky and defeated Larsen. In the following game, by his own admission, he played in the style of Capablanca: avoiding unclear complications, he aimed for the exchange of queens and a better endgame.

Game 82
M.Botvinnik-B.Larsen
Leiden 1970



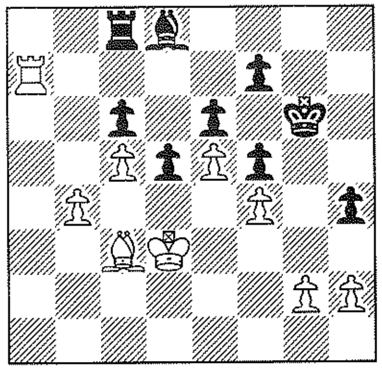
43 ♔f3 h5?!

An incautious move, giving White new possibilities. Either through a lack of understanding, or due to his natural optimism, Larsen evaluated this ending incorrectly: 'I am probably slightly better, and if my king can get into the centre, I will look for winning chances.' After 43...♔e8 44 ♖a7 (44 h3!?) 44...♔d8 45 g4 fxg4+ 46 ♔xg4 ♖c7 47 ♖a6 ♔d7 48 f5 h5+ 49 ♔f4 exf5 50 ♔xf5 Black would have had a tedious struggle for a draw.

44 ♔e2!

Hinting at 45 ♖h3. 'White's positional advantage is obvious: he controls more space, which ensures him freedom to manoeuvre, the black c- and h-pawns need defending, and the threat of b4-b5, creating a passed c-pawn, is a very serious one.' (Botvinnik)

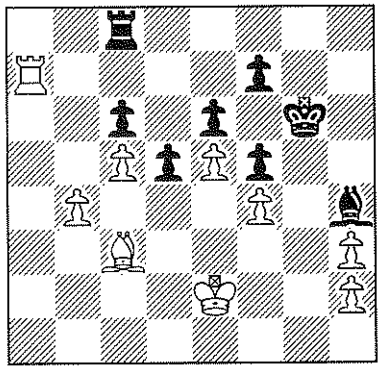
44...♔g7 45 ♗e1 ♔g6 46 ♖a7 ♗d8 47 ♗c3 h4 48 ♔d3 (ignoring the following reply by the opponent)



48...h3?!

'Larsen was probably afraid of White moving his king to a4 and then playing b4-b5. In the event of this he wanted to gain some counterplay, but subsequent events do not confirm Black's hopes.' (Botvinnik)

49 gxh3 ♗h4 50 ♔e2 (a change of plan: now White can try to make use of the h-pawns) **50...♗d8 51 ♔f3** (51 ♗e1!?) **51...♗h4 52 ♔g2 ♖d8 53 ♔f3!** (not allowing counterplay with 53 ♖c7?! ♖a8!) **53...♖c8 54 ♔e2**

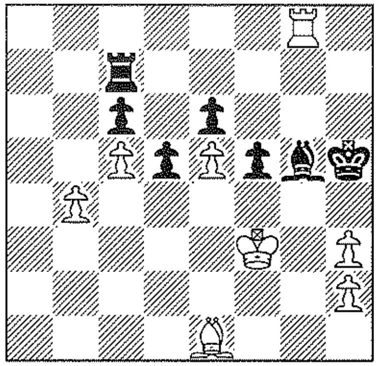


54...♗d8?!

It was more tenacious to play 54...♔g7 (54...f6? 55 ♖e7 fxe5 56 ♖xe6+) 55 ♔d3! (55 ♖b7? ♖a8 56 ♖b6 ♖a3 57 ♗d2 ♖xh3 58 ♖xc6 ♖xh2+ 59 ♔d1 ♖h1+ 60 ♔c2 ♖h2 with a draw) 55...♔g6 56 ♖b7 ♗d8 57 ♗e1 etc.

55 ♗e1! f6?! (this activity merely accelerates Black's defeat) **56 ♔f3 fxe5 57 fxe5 ♖c7 58 ♖a8 ♗g5 59 ♖g8+ ♔h5**

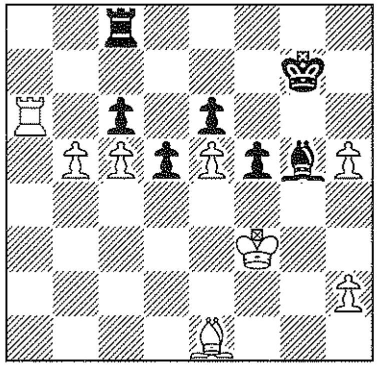
The game concludes with a series of elegant pawn thrusts:



60 h4! ♗h6

If 60...♗c1 (60...♗xh4? 61 ♖h8+) White wins with 61 ♖h8+ ♔g6 62 h5+! ♔g7 63 ♖a8 followed by ♗h4-f6+.

61 ♖h8 ♔g6 (61...♖a7? 62 ♗d2) **62 h5+! ♔g7** (62...♔xh5? 63 ♗d2) **63 ♖a8 ♗g5 64 ♖a6 ♖c8** (or 64...♔f7 65 b5!) **65 b5!**



'The time for decisive action has finally arrived. Both sides acquire three passed pawns (a rare occurrence), but White's are further advanced and therefore more dangerous.' (Botvinnik)

65...cxb5 66 ♖xe6 ♗c1 (if 66...♔f7, then 67 ♖g6 ♗e7 68 e6+ ♔f8 69 h6!) **67 ♗b4** (it is too early for 67 c6?! ♗a3!) **67...d4 68 ♖g6+ ♔h7 69 ♖d6 ♗b2 70 ♖d7+ ♔g8** (or 70...♔h6 71 ♗d2+ ♔xh5 72 ♖d6 ♖h8 73 c6!) **71 e6! ♗c3 72 e7 ♖e8 73 ♖d8 ♔f7 74 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 75 c6! 1-0**

This was the last win in the career of the sixth world champion.

'I conducted this ending by the Capablanca method,' writes Botvinnik. 'Capablanca in general had a great influence on my play, and especially in the endgame. When after his game with Ragozin in the Moscow international tournament (1936) he was chatting with us, I could not understand why the former world champion had played so cautiously in what appeared to be a simple endgame. And Capa replied: in an endgame where you are a pawn up, you should not hurry, but await a favourable opportunity to win a second pawn.'

After he stopped playing in competitions, Mikhail Moiseevich delighted the chess world for a further quarter of a century with his numerous lectures, articles and books, leaving a rich literary and pedagogical heritage. And although the chess program 'Pioneer' that he created is no match for present-day supercomputers, the very idea of developing an algorithm for playing chess remained associated with his name for ever. In his attempt to create a 'thinking' machine, as opposed to the crude calculation of numerous variations, one detects the typical Botvinnik with his eternal search for a definitive solution!

My Teacher

This chapter would be incomplete without an account of my meetings with the great master, and of the role that he played in my fate. After all, strictly speaking, of all the future world champions and grandmasters who passed through his school, I am the only genuine pupil of Botvinnik. On the whole he met the others only at training sessions, whereas he had regular and close contact with me for a full 14 years (1973-1987). And he did a great deal for me.

Botvinnik's junior school opened back in 1963, the year that I was born, but it did not operate for long at that time – only eighteen months. Among its first students were Karpov, Balashov, Razuvaev, Timoshchenko and Rashkovsky. Lessons were renewed in 1969, and somewhere in the mid-seventies Botvinnik's pupils began achieving notable successes. Three times a year – in February, May and the end of August – twenty youngsters of both sexes from various towns gathered for 10-day sessions: Dolmatov, Yusupov, Psakhis, Akhmylovskaya, Kharitonov, Ehlvest, Andrei Sokolov, Rozentalis, Nenashev, Nana Ioseliani...

In the summer of 1973 my future longstanding trainer and old friend Alexander Nikitin arranged an invitation for me and the Kiev player Borya Taborov to the next session of the school in Dubna. We were summoned to an interview with Botvinnik and questioned by the famous champion for a couple of hours: we showed him our games and talked about ourselves. I remember that Mikhail Moiseevich asked his favourite questions, such as: 'Do you analyse your own games', and 'Do you play any sports?' I also remember how staggered I was when he suddenly stood up and supported himself on a chair with just his hands...! This particular example showed what a person is capable of even at the age of 62 (however, he was also able to do this at the age of 77).

For some reason only one of us was accepted for the school. I was a 10-year-old first category player, whereas Borya was a 12-year-old candidate master. His games were, of course, more substantial than mine, but it was I who was accepted for the school. A symbolic event! Taborov soon became a master (the youngest in the country!) and he played for a few more years, but then he gave up chess: his parents wanted him to go to a respectable institute, to study science. One has to give Botvinnik's intuition its due: he lived chess and he deeply understood and sensed all its nuances. Something about me caught his fancy (they say, 'liveliness of mind') and from then on he was my patron.

Botvinnik's lessons followed a system that he had tested before the war in the Leningrad Palace of Pioneers: as a group they would examine the play of one of the pupils. Initially the latter would talk about his work between sessions, about successes in his studies, the sports he took part in, his participation in tournaments and his homework, and then he would demonstrate four of his recent games. Training games were also played at the session, and then they too would be analysed by everyone, after which, in the words of 'the Master', a final diagnosis would be made and the treatment prescribed – i.e. the homework. In addition we were taught invaluable professional secrets of preparing for competitions.

Here is a recognisable portrait of Botvinnik: 'He spoke with an emphasis on the letter "r", in a deep baritone, but very imposingly, in a tone that excluded any argument or opposing point of view. That which Botvinnik said was the truth. Often he did not even speak, but passed sentence.' This sketch by Shamkovich is echoed by Spassky: 'If during a joint analysis he will say: "You, old chap, chose an incorrect plan," don't try to argue with him – he will have uttered the truth in the first instance.' But then Spassky adds: 'For a certain time I was on friendly terms with Botvinnik and I knew that, while outwardly cold, in reality he was a warm and sympathetic person.'

But to young chess talents he reached out with all his heart. The wise teacher tried not to oppress us with his authority, and did not impose his style on his pupils – on the contrary, he did everything possible to help us to develop our own capabilities. He did not press, but with his innate pedagogical tact he would suggest the correct direction. Immediately sensing my striving for a dynamic, attacking style, he included an analysis of Alekhine's games in my homework.

At that time life was difficult for me and my mother, and Mikhail Moiseevich did what he could to support us: he procured (with the help of Yakov Gerasimovich Rokhlin) food coupons, and then a small stipend from my native 'Spartak' sports society. He followed my performances and gave valuable advice. When late in 1977 it was time for me to become a master, Botvinnik phoned Minsk and with difficulty persuaded the organisers to include me, a 14-year-old boy, 'some candidate master from Baku', in a strong master tournament, the Sokolsky Memorial (January-February 1978). Another notable event: I took first place, exceeding the master norm by 3½ points.

Direct from Minsk I hurried to a session of the Botvinnik School, where I heard from my strict instructor not just words of congratulation. Unexpectedly, Mikhail Moiseevich invited me to become his assistant. I was filled with pride – this meant that I was already capable in some way of helping the great Botvinnik. Alas, our school closed soon afterwards... It is true that in 'Spartak', by the efforts of Nikitin, the splendid Petrosian School appeared, and in 'Burevestnik' – the Smyslov School. However, I think that of the champions it was only Botvinnik who worked seriously on his project. He took lessons, analysed a great deal, set homework and so on. In addition, he had a strong assistant for several years, the remarkable trainer and teacher Mark Dvoretsky (who left to work with Yusupov and Dolmatov in early 1978).

The school supposedly closed for organisational reasons, but evidently there were also others. When Korchnoi defected in 1976, the directors of the Sports Committee ordered Soviet grandmasters to sign a collective letter with an angry condemnation of this 'base action of a traitor to the Motherland'. They all signed it, apart from Botvinnik, Spassky, Bronstein and Gulko. 'I don't sign collective letters!' declared Botvinnik. 'I can write myself!' However, such an 'honour' was granted only to Karpov... (Incidentally, also in 1953, when they collected signatures of well-known Jews regarding the notorious 'doctors' case', Botvinnik contrived to remain to one side. How he did this is a mystery: he himself did not like to expand on such topics.) It stands to reason that none of the 'refusers' was forgiven for this, and they paid for their obstinacy for a very long time, each in his own way.

...That summer I faced a serious examination – the all-union qualifying tournament for the 46th USSR Championship (Daugavpils 1978). Botvinnik asked me whether I intended to finish in one of the top places. I gave an indeterminate reply. Then he declared that with such a frame of mind there was no point in going to the tournament, which was held on the Swiss system and was therefore ineffective as a training event!

He was always against playing in 'Swisses', reckoning them to be harmful as regards improving. In particular, he objected to my trips to the world cadet championships in 1976 and 1977: 'There it is impossible to prepare, and this trains you to play non-serious chess!' In addition, he was disturbed by the shortened, 'children's' time control. In general he was right, but competitive realities and established qualification rules also existed: in order to get ahead, you had to win in your own age group. After my failures in these championships (especially in 1977, when I was clearly superior to my opponents), Botvinnik gloomily stated: 'You see, you see! You shouldn't have gone there!...'

However, the 'Swiss' in Daugavpils was an adult tournament, with grandmasters and very strong masters. In the end, giving in to my mother's persuasion (Nikitin was unable to make him change his mind), Botvinnik accepted the tournament as an unavoidable evil: 'Nevertheless this is good training. But you must play to win!' I am happy that I was able to fulfil his order: I finished first out of 64 participants – and immediately broke into the Premier League.

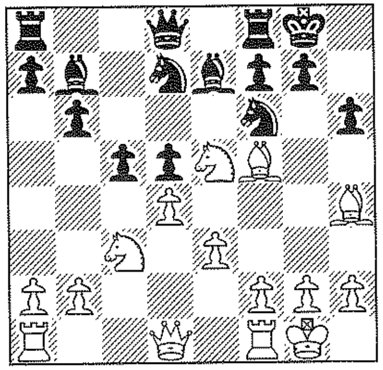
After the closure of the school, Mikhail Moiseevich and I did not part. I kept in touch and consulted with him; when I was in Moscow, I went to see him. My mother became friendly with his wife Gayane Davidovna. Relations between us were warm, but rather difficult, because Botvinnik always considered himself to be right (I also inherited this trait from him to some extent), he rigorously stuck to his point of view, being under no doubt that this is what should be done, and not something else, and was prepared to take responsibility for important decisions.

In the spring of 1979 he helped me to accomplish my next spurt: by-passing the Sports Committee, he persuaded the organisers of a strong international tournament in the Yugoslav town of Banja Luka to invite me – a 16-year-old Soviet master, without a rating or international title. And I endeavoured not to miss my chance: after starting with 9 out of 10, in the end I took first place and exceeded the grandmaster norm by two clear points. This too was a notable event, if it is remembered what problems there were with foreign trips in those days.

In 1980 we had our first serious dispute. Botvinnik was categorically opposed to my participation in the world junior (under-20) championship (it was again a 'Swiss'). He stated forcibly: 'You don't need this! All the same you won't win any laurels, and in the event of a failure there will any amount of unpleasantness. Why subject yourself to an unnecessary trial?!' And indeed, there was no one there to compete with me: my rating already exceeded 2600 and I was rapidly approaching the top ten in the world. But I had certain obligations to the Sports Committee and I did not want to let down Anatoly Bykhovsky, trainer of the USSR youth team. It wasn't good to refuse, and I disobeyed my teacher – I went to the championship (and, of course, won it).

Botvinnik was terribly angry: for a time we weren't even on speaking terms. But then my mother had a word with Gayane Davidovna, and little by little relations got back to normal. As before he would offer me useful advice. We had a lot of contact in 1981-1983, when I became USSR Champion, won the Interzonal tournament in Moscow, and also met Beliavsky there in the Candidates match.

I remember how I lost the fourth game to Beliavsky and the score became 2-2. We took a postponement, worked really hard, and then invited Botvinnik along and showed him a new move in the expected variation of the Queen's Gambit: **1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 0-0 8 ♗d3 b6 9 ♘f3 ♗b7 10 0-0 c5 11 ♘e5 ♘bd7** (the opening game went 11...♘c6?! 12 ♗a6!) **12 ♗f5!** What should Black play now?



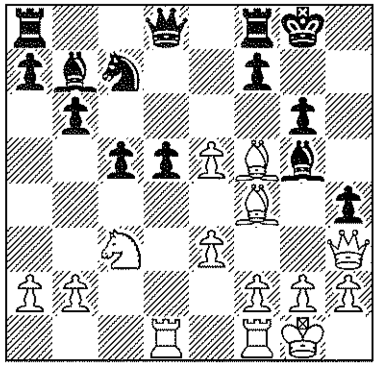
After the typical 12...♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘e4? the spectacular 14 ♘xd5! is decisive. 12...cxd4?! 13 ♘xd7! ♘xd7 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♕xd4 is also unpleasant for Black. Botvinnik carefully studied the position and murmured approvingly: 'Ummmm... A good idea!'

The following day all this occurred in the fifth game. Beliavsky preferred **12...♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘e8 14 ♗g3 ♘c7?!** (it was more tenacious to play 14...g6 15 ♗c2!) **15 ♕g4! ♕e8?!** (15...♗c8 16 ♖ad1 ♗xf5 17 ♕xf5 d4 was the lesser evil) **16 ♗d7! ♕d8**

Our home analysis concluded with the variation 16...♗c8?! 17 e6!, winning. In fact it all proved to be not so simple.

17 ♖ad1 h5 18 ♕h3 h4 19 ♗f4 ♗g5 20 ♗f5! g6

It is no better to play 20...♗xf4 21 exf4 d4 22 ♘e4 ♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♖b8 24 f5 ♖e8 25 f4 f6 26 ♕xh4 fxe5 27 f6!, or 20...♕e7 21 ♘e4! ♗xf4 22 exf4 ♘e6 23 ♘f6+! gxf6 24 ♕h4 and wins.



21 ♘e4! ♗xf4 22 exf4 gxf5 23 ♕xf5! dxe4 24 ♕g4+ ♔h7 25 ♖xd8 ♖fxd8 26 ♕xh4+ ♔g8 27 ♕e7! and White soon won, after spending only 50 minutes on the game!

When I was due to play Korchnoi and all the confusion with our semi-final match began, Botvinnik supported me morally, expressing his viewpoint in the press. And when I became world champion, Mikhail Moiseevich did not conceal his pleasure. After all, Karpov was not a researcher and in his interviews he called Botvinnik's time the stagecoach era, letting it be known that there was no point in doing serious analytical work. His defeat was therefore to some extent a triumph for the principles of the sixth champion. Especially since the 12th champion, in order not to be left behind, had to sharply raise his level of preparation...

In March 1986, not long before my return match with Karpov, the work of the school, now the Botvinnik-Kasparov School, was renewed. At the age of 75 this was interesting for Mikhail Moiseevich: it was as though he wanted his rehabilitation, his return to chess.

I remember with a smile how Armenian television turned up at the first lesson and asked Botvinnik a question: 'What do you think, will Akopian become world champion?' Volodya Akopian, a pupil at the school, was then 14, while I was 22. I had just won the title and was intending to play for a long time to come... As usual, after thinking for several seconds, Botvinnik slowly and forcibly stated: 'If he works well, he will become world champion!' I looked at Mikhail Moiseevich in astonishment: yes, Akopian would probably become a good grandmaster, but... world champion? But this was the directive of a wise teacher: you have to work! And on the other hand, he had a subtle and very distinctive sense of humour.

Many of the present-day leading grandmasters passed through our school, although it is rare for any of them to remember this. However, Kramnik has now begun to remember. But Shirov says: 'Well, I went there three or four times...' If Piket or Van Wely had been there three or four times, see what it would have done for their play! Incidentally, Piket once, in the summer of 1988, came to Moscow to study with the 'Patriarch'. Grandmaster Sosonko, who was accompanying the young Dutchman, made a subtle observation about Botvinnik: 'His purposeful, knowing no doubts and largely dogmatic manner of thinking, together, it stands to reason, with his very high class, was ideal for lessons with young players, and as a teacher he was, of course, outstanding.'

At these sessions the main burden fell on me: I took the lessons and gave simultaneous displays with clocks, against very strong opponents (apart from the juniors already named, those who played here included Tiviakov, Sakaev, Rublevsky, Ulibin, Alterman, Serper, Landa, Galliamova...). For his part, Botvinnik liked to remember his old games. 'What, don't you know my game with so-and-so from the trades union championship?' – suddenly interrupting the analysis, he tortured another pupil. Of course, in this period he was already thinking in somewhat outdated categories: after all, these were not the 70s, but the end of the 80s, and the computer era was beginning. Even so, his influence was colossal! Such contact with a living legend gave everyone a great deal, gradually expanding and deepening one's impression of chess. I feel sorry for those pupils who do not understand this...

When Gorbachev's *perestroika* began in the country, my relations with Mikhail Moiseevich, alas, showed signs of a rift, which no longer proved possible to patch up. Increasingly often we began disagreeing over fundamental questions. Botvinnik was a fervent supporter of the old FIDE system (which he himself had created), whereas I thought it was time that it was replaced. This was the time when the GMA – the Grandmasters' Association – was flourishing, and while it was only a question of pressure on FIDE, Botvinnik considered its activity to be positive: he thought that Campomanes had done everything incorrectly and he had to be made to resign. But to touch FIDE itself was impossible! But to me it seemed that everything was rotten to the core at FIDE... But this was a small issue, and the main one was something else.

Botvinnik was a staunch communist, a child of the Stalin regime. He spoke out for 'socialism with a human face' and thought that the system itself must not be changed, but merely improved. At the end of his life his favourite theory was that capitalism is a spontaneous market, where there are no laws, and the advantages of socialism will be fully disclosed when we learn to plan skilfully, with the help of... powerful computers! He sincerely believed that computers would help to save the planned economy (for which, in particular, he tried to create his 'thinking' program). And he was terribly unhappy with the 'supervisors of *perestroika*', and repeated that everything was proceeding 'in the wrong direction' and that everything should be done 'differently'.

For my part, I had directly opposing views: by that time I had already become a convinced anti-communist. We turned out to be too different! What can be done: abrupt changes in a country always affect relations between 'fathers' and 'sons'. When opposition begins in a civil society, even amicable families break up. Especially if those arguing are inflexible: it was here that the seeds of the coming split lay. Thus the break between us, to all appearances, was historically inevitable.

In one of the lessons of the summer-autumn session of our school (Druskininkai 1987) Botvinnik suddenly began teaching the lads some basic politics, and in particular he declared: 'But, you know, Stalin won the war!' Here I couldn't restrain myself and I retorted: 'Mikhail Moiseevich, I have a completely different opinion, but let's not discuss this topic in front of the children!' Of course, Botvinnik flew into a rage: it wasn't enough that I was encroaching on FIDE – I was also an enemy of the Soviet system! For the first time, to my great regret, we genuinely broke up (although the school continued to function for a time).

The scandalous conclusion to the 55th USSR Championship (Moscow, August 1988) merely fixed an accomplished fact. In this tournament I shared first place with Karpov, and according to the regulations an additional match of four games for the title of USSR Champion should have taken place. In the presence of the participants and hundreds of spectators, Botvinnik, the chief arbiter, made the pairings, and Karpov drew the white pieces. But, on arriving for the first game a couple of days later, I found myself at... a press conference! There was no sign of Karpov, and, together with officials from the Sports Committee, Botvinnik explained to the public that the match had been called off 'in view of irreconcilable disagreements between the participants'. An absurd spectacle: a respected man had violated the rules that he had followed all his life!

It all turned out to be simple: Karpov decided to avoid the match, being allegedly unhappy with the early starting date and the need to play to the first win in the event of a 2-2 score. (Although, this condition was a concession on my part: a year earlier in a similar match between Beliavsky and Salov, in the event of a tie the superior 'Berger' system was used! Guess who had the superior 'Berger' tie-break in 1988...) And, as was usual, the Sports Committee went along with 'our Tolik', this time with the support of Botvinnik.

You may ask, why did Mikhail Moiseevich need this? The authorities played on the fact that for many years he had been ignored. And suddenly he was assigned a room in the Central Chess Club, given the opportunity to open his laboratory, acquire computers and travel abroad; he was made a member of the USSR Chess Federation Presidium and they began listening to his opinions... And Botvinnik decided that he was playing an important role in the changes that were occurring in the chess world. He did, of course, play a certain role, but the main thing was that the enormous authority of his name was exploited to the utmost by functionaries associated with chess.

I am convinced that his experience and authority could indeed have been used for the good of chess. Botvinnik sincerely desired the revival of the Soviet Chess School, although the methods he suggested were questionable. Alas, after the break-up of the Soviet Union our officials spent a mass of time and effort on a struggle for the former USSR Central Chess Club. The union committee officials, supported by Botvinnik and Karpov (who strangely enough ended up in the same team) did not want to give up the building to the natural and rightful successor – the young Russian Chess Federation, which I supported. This tiring and protracted conflict did not do chess any good – on the contrary, numerous favourable opportunities were missed. Probably they should simply have been given the club – and allowed do with it what they wanted...

Well, of course, for Botvinnik my break with FIDE and the creation of the PCA in 1993 became clear evidence that he was right! This, he said, is what that anti-Soviet Kasparov has sunk to: in chess too he has encroached on the holy of holies and disdained the most important organisation, the hearth of the official world champions... Complete disintegration! There's no denying it, but even so I should have done this slightly later: not before, but after my match with Short.

Nevertheless, I had not lost all hope of reconciliation. In the spring of 1994 a convenient opportunity presented itself. Together with the PCA, Moscow was preparing to stage a grandiose festival – the 'Kremlin stars' rapid chess tournament. How honourable and symbolic it would be, if the chief arbiter of the first super-tournament in the Kremlin were to be the great Botvinnik! And so with Andrei Makarov, the new President of the Russian Chess Federation, and grandmaster Averbakh, I went to see Botvinnik in his office on the second floor of the Central Chess Club.

At this time Mikhail Moiseevich had very poor eyesight, in fact he was almost blind: he moved about with the help of his nephew. But his mind was completely clear! Just as 15-20 years earlier, he knew exactly what he wanted and what he didn't want. He listened impassively to our suggestion that he should be the chief arbiter of the tournament and, after a little thought, he rapped out: 'Rapid chess will be the death of our game!' (or something of that sort.) I said to him: 'Mikhail Moiseevich, but this form of the game is one that will make it more popular...' And he replied: 'This will do enormous damage, colossal damage...' I tried again: 'This is how everyone is playing – hundreds of grandmasters, even Vasily Vasilievich is playing in this tournament!' And he in reply: 'I don't give a damn about the opinion of the majority! I am used to thinking with my own mind!'

That was Botvinnik to the core! And so we left empty-handed. It was my last meeting with my teacher. In the following spring, May 1995, he died.

A week after his death I was playing in the Euwe memorial tournament in Amsterdam. Leaving the hotel for the first round, my second, Yuri Dokhoian, and I were involved in an animated discussion about how best to get to the tournament hall: an estimation showed that it would take 20 minutes on foot. Grandmaster Sosonko, who was standing alongside, suggested a different, shorter route. 'No, that's a very noisy street,' I objected. With Sosonko, an outstanding chess writer, this little scene provoked a fine association:

'Mikhail Moiseevich with his ideas of more than half a century's antiquity, through disagreements and arguments, years and death looked severely at his pupil. His life encompassed the most important events of this cruel, departing century: both world wars, the ascent of man into space, and finally, the creation and collapse of an amazing state, unlike any other, of which he was the chess symbol.'

Some wonderful words in memory of Botvinnik were also spoken by his historic opponent, the seventh world champion Vasily Smyslov:

'I remember how, in 1981, after the death of Euwe, Mikhail Moiseevich asked me, when the time came, to write an obituary about him. I objected: it was not known which of us would be the first to have to write an obituary. "No," replied Botvinnik, "everything should be by seniority. My turn is next." But fate decreed otherwise: first Petrosian and Tal departed... Botvinnik undoubtedly adhered to the classical views on chess. He was a worthy successor to his great predecessors – Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine. One could observe a clear strategic idea in his play. By character he was a researcher, and at the basis of his approach to chess lay a quest for truth. In the years when computers did not yet exist, Botvinnik's deep analyses anticipated that direction of modern chess, which makes wide use of the accumulation and generalisation of information with the help of computer technology.'

CHAPTER THREE

Vasily the Seventh

Vasily Vasilievich Smyslov (born 24 March 1921) was the strongest player in the world in the mid-1950s. At that time he accomplished a genuine competitive feat – he won two Candidates matches and played three matches for the world crown with Botvinnik (a record that lasted for 30 years, right up to my battles with Karpov). Only his indifferent health and the iron character of his opponent led to a dramatic defeat for the seventh world champion in the 1958 return match.

Because of the apparent simplicity of his style, Smyslov is rarely mentioned among the players who have made the greatest contribution to the development of the ancient game. However, his victories at the peak of his career are amazing for the lack of a clear defence for his opponents, and a careful study reveals that no one in the world could withstand Smyslov's very fine technique. His credo was as follows: 'I will make 40 good moves and if you are able to do the same, the game will end in a draw.' But it was precisely this 'doing the same' that was the most difficult: Smyslov's technique was ahead of his time.

Speaking about the source of such a refined style, Vasily Vasilievich gratefully credits his father – his first and only chess mentor: 'He instilled in me a love for so-called "simple" positions, with the participation of only a few pieces. I was able to gain a deep feeling for what each piece is capable of, to sense their peculiarities, their strength and impotence in various different situations on the board, the limits of their capabilities, what they "like" and what they "don't like" and how they behave... Such a "mutual understanding" with the pieces enables a player to see that which often remains concealed to purely logical analysis. It is then that the innate ability of a player, which I call a sense of harmony, manifests itself.'

I think that it is this innate sense of harmony which has helped Smyslov to break all records for chess longevity: in 1983 he reached the final Candidates match and later he successfully competed in events right to the end of the century. This phenomenon was wittily explained by Spassky: 'Vasily Vasilievich has an incredible intuition, and I would call it his "hand" – that is, his hand knows on which square to place every piece, and he does not need to calculate anything with his head.'

From Moscow to Groningen

The seven-year-old Muscovite Vasya Smyslov's first chess book was Dufresne's self-tutor, published with an appendix of Emanuel Lasker's lectures *Common Sense in Chess*. But the boy quickly assimilated virtually all of his father's library... The formation of the future world champion took place at a very interesting moment in chess history: passions had not yet cooled after the grandiose match in Buenos Aires (1927), and Alekhine's striking victories and his unexpected defeat in the match with Euwe (1935) were being discussed in heated fashion. Also, since 1925 an obvious chess boom had been observed in the USSR: numerous mass events, clubs, sections and circles, Botvinnik's encouraging successes, and two major international tournaments in Moscow (1935 and 1936), where the young Vasya had the good fortune to observe the play of the legendary Lasker and Capablanca.

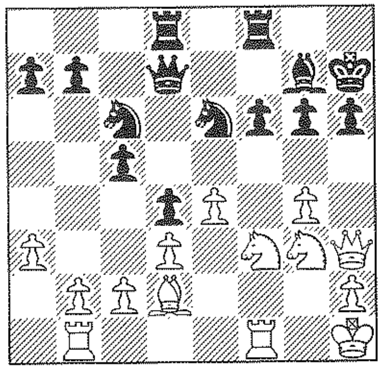
The name of Vasily Smyslov, a pupil of the Moskvoretsky House of Pioneers, first became known in 1938, when he won the national junior championship and shared 1st-2nd places in the Moscow Championship (ahead, incidentally, of grandmaster Lilienthal, the creator of a sensational win against Capablanca, Hastings 1934/35). In 1940 he made his debut in the 12th USSR Championship and straight away took third place, only half a point behind Bondarevsky and Lilienthal, but ahead of Keres, Boleslavsky and Botvinnik. A third place in the match-tournament for the title of Absolute USSR Champion (1941) then brought the talented 20-year-old the grandmaster title.

During the war, despite the hardships, Smyslov managed to preserve himself for top-class chess, performing confidently in the tournaments of that time, including three Moscow Championships (1942, 1943/44 and 1944/45) and also the 13th USSR Championship (second place behind Botvinnik). And each time his competitive achievements were reinforced by fine, subtle play.

Game 83

V.Smyslov-A.Kotov

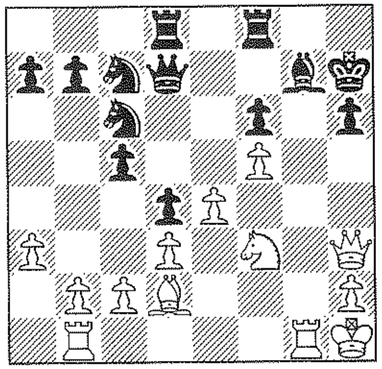
Moscow Championship 1943/44



24 ♘f5!

'A typical piece sacrifice in such positions. The special feature of it in the given instance is that White will not try to regain the sacrificed material immediately, but will build up his attack by systematic pressure. Here one has to rely on an evaluation of the position based on general principles, rather than calculate specific variations.' (Smyslov)

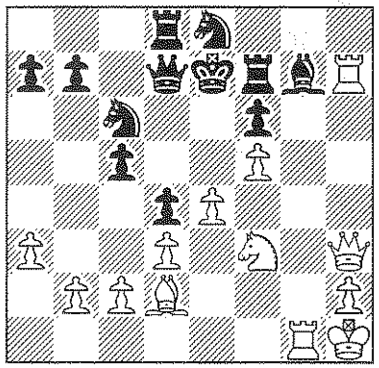
24...gxf5 25 gxf5 ♘c7 (not 25...♘g5 26 ♗xg5 fxg5 27 ♘xg5+ ♔g8 28 ♘e6 etc.) **26 ♖g1** (threatening 27 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 28 ♖g1+ ♔f7 29 ♕h5+ ♔e7 30 ♖g7+)



26...♘e8

If 26...♖h8 White would have won by 27 ♗xh6! ♗xh6 (27...♔g8 28 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 29 ♖g1) 28 ♖g6 ♕g7 29 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 30 ♕g3+ ♔f8 31 ♕xc7.

27 ♖g6 ♖f7 28 ♖bg1 ♔g8 29 ♖xh6 ♔f8 (fleeing from the mate on h8) **30 ♖h7 ♔e7**

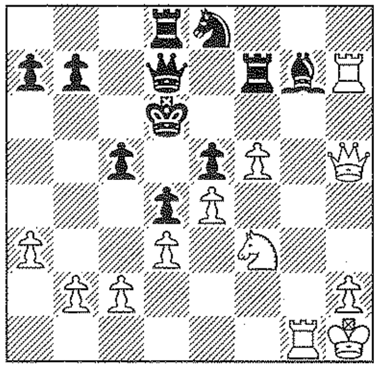


31 ♕h5! ♔d6

'Black continues his king march in search of a safe shelter. 31...♖c8 is insufficient in view of 32 ♘g5! fxg5 33 ♗xg5+, for example: 33...♘f6 34 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 35 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 36 ♕h6+ ♔e5 37 ♖xg7 ♕e8 38 ♖g6, or 33...♔d6 34 ♗f4+ ♔e7 (34...♘e5 35 f6!) 35 f6+! ♘xf6 36 ♖gxg7 ♘xh5 37 ♖xf7+ ♔e6 38 ♖xd7 ♘xf4 39 ♖xb7 with a won ending.' (Smyslov)

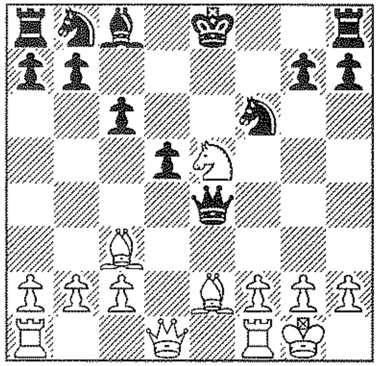
32 ♗f4+ ♘e5 (if 32...♔e7 there would have followed 33 ♘g5! fxg5 34 ♗xg5+) **33 ♗xe5+ fxe5**

It would appear that Black has parried the direct threats to his king, but...



34 f6! (a spectacular blow) **34...♘xf6 35 ♕xe5+ ♔c6 36 ♖hxg7! ♔b5 37 ♘xd4+ ♔b6** (or 37...♕xd4 38 ♕xd4 cxd4 39 ♖xf7) **38 b4 ♖c8** (38...cxd4? 39 ♕c5+ ♔a6 40 ♕a5 mate) **39 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 40 ♕d6+ ♖c6 41 ♘xc6 ♘xe4 42 bxc5+ 1-0**

In the 1944/45 Moscow Championship Smyslov won the best-known game in the Latvian Gambit, against Kamyshov: **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 f5?! 3 ♘xe5 ♕f6 4 ♘c4! fxe4 5 ♘c3 ♕g6 6 d3! ♗b4 7 ♗d2 ♗xc3 8 ♗xc3 d5** (8...♘f6 9 ♗xf6!) **9 ♘e5 ♕f5 10 dxe4 ♕xe4+ 11 ♗e2 ♘f6 12 0-0 c6**



13 ♗h5+! ♔f8 14 ♖e1 ♕h4 15 ♗g6! ♘a6 16 ♕e2 ♗h3 17 ♘f3! 1-0. The triumph of the rising star in this tournament (1. Smyslov – 13 out of 16, undefeated; 2. Ragozin – 11; 3. Lilienthal – 10½; 4. Flohr – 9½; 5-6. Bondarevsky and Konstantinopolsky – 9) was sized up by the well-known master and journalist Vasily Panov:

'There is no doubt that in the person of the young Moscow Champion we have a real contender not only for the Soviet Championship, but also for the world chess crown. With every new performance by Smyslov, his play becomes increasingly harmonious, his attack – stronger and deeper, his defence – more honed and efficient, and his manoeuvres – more unexpected and skilful; his technique is distinguished by its simplicity and clarity, and all this bears the stamp of freshness and originality... There is no doubt that a match between Smyslov and the Absolute USSR Champion Botvinnik would create considerable interest throughout the chess world.'

In September 1945, following the conclusion of the Second World War, a double-round USSR-USA radio match was held, in which Smyslov played on second board against one of the world's strongest grandmasters, Samuel Reshevsky (1911-1992).

Their first game saw an unusual line in the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez, which had been developed in those years by Soviet players. It is probable that in 1945 Reshevsky was not yet inferior to Smyslov, and perhaps in some ways was even superior, but Smyslov had been very active in the Soviet tournaments of the war era and had been constantly testing opening ideas. Their duel vividly demonstrated the difference in the arsenals at the disposal of the two players. As in the Denker-Botvinnik game (*Game No.68*), the world saw what for itself was meant by the 'Soviet Chess School' with its own eyes.

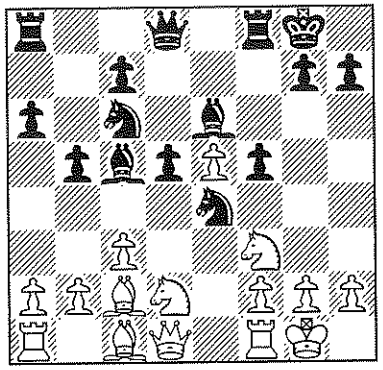
Game 84
V.Smyslov-S.Reshevsky
Radio Match USSR-USA 1945, 1st game
Ruy Lopez C82

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 (9 ♕e2 – *Game No.89*; 9 ♘bd2 – *Game No.118*) **9...♗c5**

The alternatives are 9...♗e7 (*Volume 1, Game No.65*) and 9...♘c5.

10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2 f5

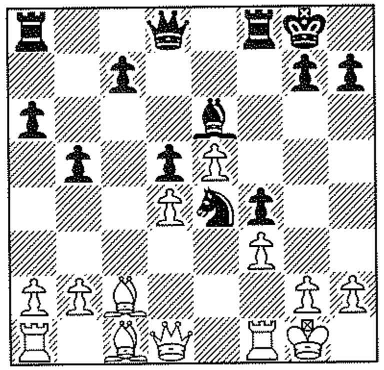
After the 1978 and 1981 Karpov-Korchnoi matches 11...♗f5 is fashionable, while in those days they also played 11...♘xf2 (11...♘xd2 12 ♕xd2! *Volume 1, Games Nos.28 and 66*) 12 ♖xf2 f6 13 exf6 ♕xf6?! (13...♗xf2+! 14 ♔xf2 ♕xf6 is more accurate, as was later demonstrated with particular success by grandmasters Chekhov and Yusupov) 14 ♕f1! with advantage to White (Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow Championship 1943/44). Incidentally, in that game the young talent inflicted the only defeat in the tournament on his venerable opponent (1. Botvinnik – 13½ out of 16; 2. Smyslov – 11½).



12 ♘b3 ♗b6 13 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 15 cxd4

Nowadays 15 ♕xd4!? c5 16 ♕d1 is played, for example: 16...h6 (16...f4 17 f3 ♘g5 18 a4!; 16...♕e7!? 17 a4 ♖ad8 – Suetin) 17 f3 ♘g5 18 ♗e3 ♖c8 19 ♕d2 a5 20 ♖ad1 ♕e7 21 ♗b1 ♔h8 22 ♖fe1 ♖c7 23 ♗f2 b4 with a complicated game (Short-Timman, El Escorial 12th matchgame 1993).

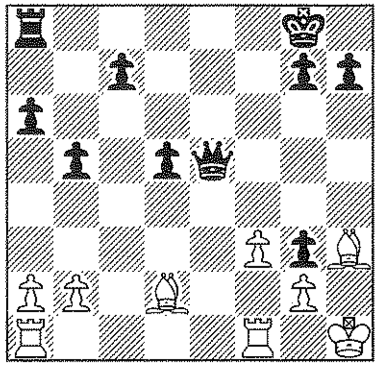
15...f4 16 f3



16...♘g3 (16...♘g5? 17 h4 ♘f7 18 ♗xf4 ♕xh4 19 ♕d2 is unfavourable for Black) **17 hxg3 fxg3 18 ♕d3!** (but not 18 ♖e1? ♕h4 19 ♗e3 ♕h2+ 20 ♔f1 ♗h3! and wins, Liberzon-Estrin, Moscow 1940) **18...♗f5**

Necessary: if 18...♕h4?! (18...g6? 19 ♕e3! ♕h4 20 ♕h6), then 19 ♕xh7+! ♕xh7 20 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 21 ♗d2 (or 21 ♗g5) with clearly the better ending for White.

19 ♕xf5! ♖xf5 20 ♗xf5 ♕h4 21 ♗h3 ♕xd4+ 22 ♔h1 ♕xe5 23 ♗d2

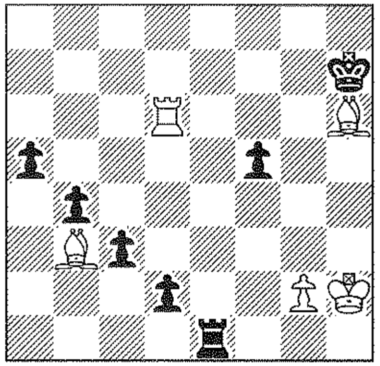


'A very interesting position has arisen. Black has a queen against White's rook and two bishops and an avalanche of black pawns will soon be formed on the queenside. Whose chances are better in the coming sharp struggle is a question that still awaits a definite answer.' (Smyslov) Alas, I have the feeling that this variation is avoided by both sides nowadays. Instinctively it seems to me that White should be better, although the computer confers a gigantic advantage on Black. In general, the situation is unclear, but playing White is more interesting: there is the possibility of attacking!

23...♕xb2

The source game Boleslavsky-Ragozin (Moscow 1942) went 23...c5 24 ♖ae1 (24 ♗c3!? d4 25 ♖ae1) 24...♕xb2 25 ♗f4, and after 25...♕f6? 26 ♗xg3 d4 27 ♖e6 ♕g5 28 ♔h2 c4 29 f4! the f-pawn broke through Black's defences. It is better to play 25...d4 26 ♗xg3 (26 ♗e6+!? ♔h8 27 ♗d5) 26...d3 27 ♗e5 (27 ♗e6+!? ♔h8 28 ♗e5) 27...♕xa2 28 ♗d6 ♕b2 29 ♗e6+ ♔h8 30 ♗e5 (Boleslavsky-Botvinnik, Sverdlovsk 1943), and here 30...♕c2! 31 ♖c1 (not 31 f4? d2 32 ♖d1 c4 33 f5 ♖f8 34 f6 ♖xf6! and Black wins) 31...♕e2 32 ♖ce1 ♕c2 would have equalised.

Instead of this Botvinnik played 30...♕d2? and came under a terrible attack: 31 f4 c4 32 f5 ♖f8 33 ♖e4 c3 34 ♖ef4 ♖f6 35 ♖4f2 ♕h6+ 36 ♔g1 b4 37 ♖f3 d2 38 ♗b3 (the rook and bishops are clearly stronger than the queen and pawns) 38...♕h4 39 ♖d3 ♖f8 40 ♖g3 ♕e7 41 ♗d4 ♖f6 42 ♖e3 ♕d7 43 ♖f4 a5 44 ♖fe4 ♖f8 45 f6 gxf6 46 ♖g3 h6 47 ♖h4 ♔h7 48 ♔h2 f5 49 ♗e3 ♕c6 50 ♗f4 ♖d8 51 ♗e5 ♕b7 52 ♗e6 ♖f8 53 ♗f4 ♕g7 54 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 55 ♗b3 ♖d8 56 ♗e5+ ♔g6 57 ♖d4 ♖e8 58 ♗f4 ♖e1 59 ♖d6+ ♔g7 60 ♗xh6+ ♔h7.



Analysis diagram

A remarkable picture! Here Boleslavsky missed 61 ♗f8! followed by the unavoidable ♖h6 mate, and Black was able to save himself by exchanging his quartet of connected passed pawns for the enemy bishops.

These games, which were well known to Smyslov, showed what difficulties could be lying in wait for Black. Reshevsky, who was not familiar with the nuances of this mind-boggling position, now faced problems that could hardly be solved at the board.

24 ♗f4 c5?

A serious error: in mobilising his c-pawn, Black gives up his very important d-pawn. His only chance was 24...d4! followed by ...d4-d3-d2, as, for example, in the game Tseshkovsky-Tal (43rd USSR Championship, Leningrad 1974). It would appear that here Black is alright: the d2-pawn will restrict the white rooks, preventing them from erecting a mating construction with the help of the bishops.

The similar idea with the advance of the c-pawn does not work: White succeeds in stopping it.

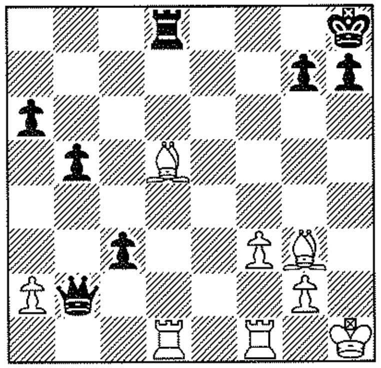
25 ♗e6+ ♔h8

'It is interesting to note that Smyslov spent less than six minutes on his first 25 moves, whereas Reshevsky was already in serious time-trouble.' (Botvinnik)

26 ♗xd5 ♖d8 (after 26...♕d4 27 ♗e4 ♖d8 28 ♗xg3 the bishops have strong points, and the inclusion of the rooks is merely a question of time) **27 ♖ad1 c4**

Consistently pushing the pawn. 27...♕e2 does not change the character of the position, for example: 28 ♗xg3 (28 ♔g1!?) 28...♖xd5 29 ♖de1 ♖h5+ 30 ♔g1 ♕xa2 31 ♖e8+ ♕g8 32 ♖fe1 a5 33 ♖1e7 a4 34 ♗e5 ♖g5 35 f4 ♖g4 36 f5 and 37 f6! with crushing threats (a non-obligatory, but typical variation).

28 ♗xg3 c3 (not 28...♕xa2? 29 ♗xc4! ♖xd1 30 ♖xd1, while if 28...♕f6, then 29 ♗e4 c3 30 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 31 ♗c2 and the black pawns are blockaded)



29 ♗e5!

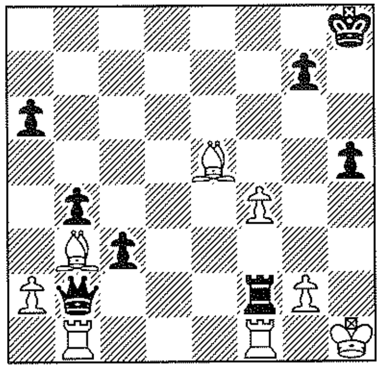
The bishops are fulfilling a double function: they are aiming both at the enemy king, and backwards, at the queenside, restraining the pawns.

29...b4 (if 29...♕e2 there is 30 ♗xc3 ♖xd5 31 ♖de1! ♖h5+ 32 ♔g1 and wins) **30 ♗b3 ♖d2!**

The only move. In a difficult position Reshevsky seeks counter-chances, preventing the white rook from penetrating onto the seventh rank. 'After 30...♖xd1 31 ♖xd1 h5 32 ♖d7 ♕b1+ 33 ♔h2 c2 34 ♖xg7 ♕c1 35 ♖g8+ ♔h7 36 ♖h8+ ♔g6 37 ♗xc2+ ♔f7 38 ♗g3 further resistance becomes pointless.' (Smyslov)

31 f4! (the battering-ram begins advancing, and in addition 32 ♖xd2 ♕xd2 33 ♖d1 is threatened) **31...h5 32 ♖b1 ♖f2!**

Restraining the charge of the f-pawn.



33 ♖fe1

Smyslov attaches an exclamation mark to this move, explaining that in the event of 33 ♖xb2?! ♖xf1+ 34 ♔h2 cxb2 35 ♗xb2 ♖xf4 Black would have gained drawing chances. However, as the computer 'wisely' observes, 33 ♖fd1! concludes the game much more quickly, for example: 33...♕e2 34 ♖d8+ ♔h7 35 ♗g8+ ♔g6 (or 35...♔h6 36 ♖d6+ g6 37 ♖d7) 36 ♖d6+ ♔f5 37 ♗e6+ ♔e4 38 ♖xb4+ ♔e3 39 ♗d4+. An ideal demonstration of the power of 'combined forces'!

33...♕d2 (33...♖e2 34 ♖ed1! ♖d2 35 ♖xb2, or 33...♕a3 34 ♗d4 ♖xf4 35 ♖e8+ ♔h7 36 ♗c2+ ♔h6 37 ♗e3 g5 38 ♖e7 and wins) **34 ♖bd1 ♕b2**

Or 34...♖e2 35 ♖g1 ♕e3 36 ♖d8+ ♔h7 37 ♗g8+ ♔g6 38 ♖d6+ ♔f5 39 ♗h7+ with the same mating construction.

35 ♖d8+ ♔h7 36 ♗g8+ ♔g6 37 ♖d6+ ♔f5 38 ♗e6+ ♔g6 39 ♗d5+ (39 ♗g8+ ♔f5 40 ♗h7+ ♔g4 41 ♖g6+ ♔h4 42 ♗xg7 is also good) **39...♔h7 40 ♗e4+ ♔g8 41 ♗g6! 1-0**

It need hardly be said what this match meant for the Americans! By putting Denker on board one (effectively offering him as a sacrifice to Botvinnik), they were hoping to recoup their losses on board two. Botvinnik was well known to everyone, Flohr too, but their young colleague only by hearsay. To some extent Smyslov was a mystery. In any case the Americans reckoned that the experienced Reshevsky would be a major force. And whereas the 'lapse' in the first game could be put down to an opening catastrophe, in the second Sammy was of course eager to gain his revenge. But... again he encountered an idea that was completely new to him, this time in his opponent's favourite defence – the Slav.

Game 85
S.Reshevsky-V.Smyslov
Radio Match USSR-USA 1945, 2nd game
Slav Defence D15

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 e3

'Aiming for revenge, Reshevsky chooses a continuation that leads to a complicated positional struggle without premature exchanges and simplification.' (Smyslov)

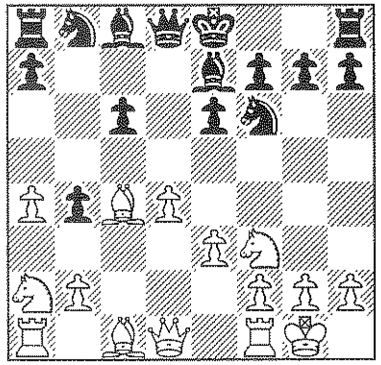
5 e4 is sharper, while the main variation 5 a4 ♗f5 had already been tested by Smyslov in games with Mikenas (1944) and Lilienthal (1945): 6 e3 e6 7 ♗xc4 ♗b4 8 0-0 ♘bd7 9 ♕e2 (9 ♕b3 – *Game No.21*) 9...♗g6 etc.

5...b5 6 a4 b4 7 ♘a2 e6 8 ♗xc4 ♗e7

In view of the following note, 8...♗b7! 9 0-0 ♗e7 is more accurate, but not 9...c5 10 ♕e2 ♘bd7 11 ♖d1 cxd4?! 12 ♘xd4 with a slight advantage to White (Kotov-Smyslov, 13th USSR Championship, Moscow 1944).

9 0-0

Euwe suggested 9 a5!? ♕xa5 10 ♗d2 ♕b6 11 ♕a4 with the initiative. And although here too it is quite possible to fight for equality, is it worth giving White this chance?

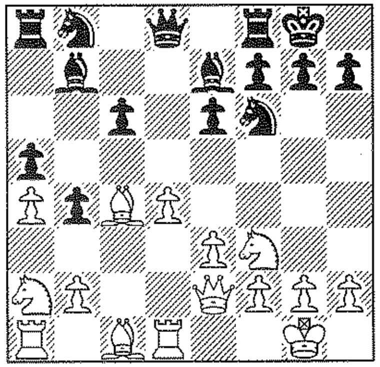


9...0-0 10 ♕e2 ♗b7

The source game Réti-Lasker (Mährisch Ostrau 1923) went 10...♘bd7 11 b3 a5! 12 ♗b2 c5 13 ♖fd1 ♕b6 14 ♘c1 ♗a6 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 ♘e5 ♗xc4 17 ♘xc4 ♕a6 18 ♗d4 ♖fc8 with equality, and subsequently Black was able to exploit the weakening of the c3-square.

11 ♖d1 a5!

'Strengthening his pawn bastions on the wing. White's dark-squared bishop is somewhat cramped and Black has good chances of seizing the initiative.' (Smyslov) He will soon play ...c6-c5, not fearing the weakening of the c4- and b5-squares, since it is hard for his opponent to reach them on account of his lag in development.



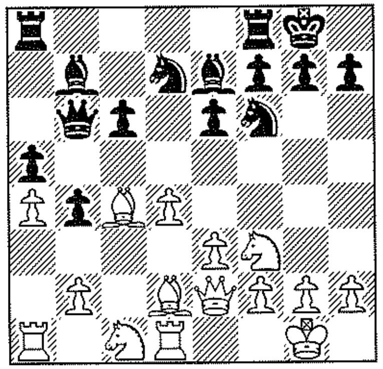
12 ♗d2

After considerable thought, Reshevsky

realised that in the first instance he had to solve the problem of his c1-bishop and a2-knight. 12 e4 is well met by 12...c5 13 dxc5 (13 d5 exd5 14 exd5 ♗d6 15 ♗g5 ♘bd7 16 ♘c1 ♕c7 with equality) 13...♕c7 14 e5 ♘e4! 15 ♗e3 ♘bd7 16 ♖ac1 ♘exc5, threatening the e5-pawn (Kotov-Smyslov, Moscow 1945).

12...♘bd7 13 ♘c1 ♕b6

The little-known game Duz-Khotimirsky - Smyslov (Moscow 1942) went 13...c5 14 ♘d3 cxd4 (14...♕b6!?) 15 ♘xd4 ♕b6 16 ♗e1 ♖ac8 17 ♖ac1 ♘c5 18 ♗b5 ♘xd3 19 ♗xd3 ♘e4 with equality.

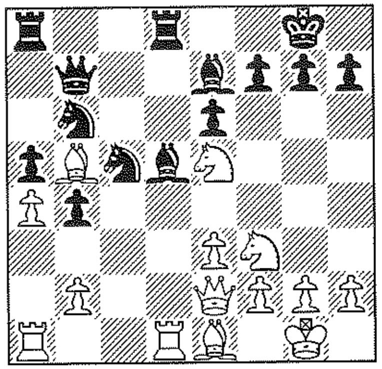


14 ♘b3!

Reshevsky was also not familiar with the game Fridstein-Smyslov (Moscow 1945), which went 14 ♘d3 c5 15 ♘de5 ♘xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♖ad8 with excellent play for Black: after 17 ♗b5?! (17 dxc5 ♕xc5 is also unfavourable for White) 17...cxd4 18 exd4 ♕xd4 19 ♘c4 ♕d5 20 ♕f1 ♕h5 21 ♘xa5 ♗f3!! 22 gxf3 ♖xd2! 23 ♖xd2 ♕g5+ 24 ♔h1 ♕xd2 25 ♕e2 ♕f4 26 ♘c4 ♖c8 27 ♖d1 ♖c5! 28 ♘e3 g6 29 ♘g2 ♕c7 30 ♘e3 b3! 31 ♕d3 ♕f4 32 ♘g2 ♕b4 33 ♘e3 ♕h4! he soon won.

Instead of this the experienced American grandmaster puts the a5-pawn under attack and reinforces his d4-point. It is interesting to follow how a world-class player extricates himself from a difficult situation. He withdraws his bishop to e1 and then begins manoeuvring with his knights, preparing f2-f3, e3-e4 and the emergence of the bishop at f2 or g3, after which he may be able to exploit the 'holes' on Black's queenside.

14...c5 15 ♗e1 ♖fd8 16 ♗b5 ♗d5! 17 ♘bd2 ♕b7 (creating pressure along the long diagonal) **18 ♘c4 ♘b6 19 ♘ce5 ♘e4 20 dxc5 ♘xc5**



21 ♘d4!

'White concentrates his minor pieces for the seizure of the c6-square, leaving the g2-pawn en prise. The pawn sacrifice is in fact fictitious, since after 21...♗xg2?! 22 f3 ♗h3 23 ♗c6 the exchange is lost. Black's plan involves counterplay on the queenside, where White has a weakness at b3.' (Smyslov)

21...♖dc8! 22 f3 ♘b3! (this is better than the questionable 22...♗d6 23 ♗g3 ♕c7 24 ♘ec6 ♗xg3 25 hxg3) **23 ♘xb3 ♗xb3 24 ♖d3**

The rook has become cramped: if 24 ♖d2 (24 ♖dc1? ♖xc1 25 ♖xc1 ♗xa4), then 24...f6 25 ♘g4 (25 ♘d3 ♘c4) 25...♖d8 etc.

24...♗c2 25 ♖d2 b3! (supporting the bishop at c2 and fixing the b2-pawn) **26 ♗f2 ♗b4**

Creating a combinative motif with the sacrifice of a piece on c3. In this very complicated position both players display remarkable resourcefulness!

27 ♖d4 ♘d5?

The immediate 27...♗c3? did not work in view of 28 bxc3 b2 29 ♖f1 b1♕ 30 ♖xb1 ♗xb1 31 ♕d1! ♕c7 (31...♗g6 32 ♗c6!) 32 ♘c6 ♗g6 33 ♗g3 ♕b7 34 ♘xa5. But not one of the commentators mentioned that it was stronger to play 27...♗c5! 28 ♖d2 ♘d5 29 ♘d3 ♗d6 with some advantage: the mighty bishop at c2 severs White's position, ensuring control of both the d-file and the c-file.

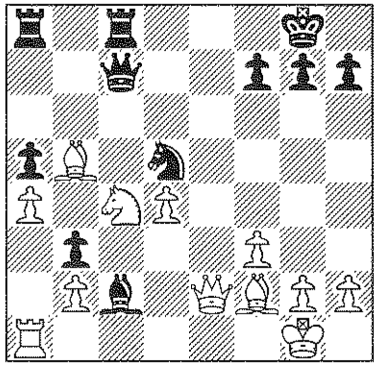
28 ♘d3?

I don't understand why White didn't play 28 e4! (perhaps because of time-trouble?). This opportunity is also not mentioned by the commentators, although 28...♘c3?! 29 bxc3 ♗xc3 30 ♖f1 ♗xd4 (30...b2? 31 ♖d7) 31 ♗xd4 favours White. And if the knight moves to another square, he also has no reason to complain – on the contrary, he may be able to seize the initiative. Apparently Sammy thought that e3-e4 would not run away, and he decided to play more quietly, underestimating his opponent's clever reply.

28...e5! (diverting the knight from the defence of the b2-pawn) **29 ♘xe5!**

A subtle evaluation of the position! White is ready to give up the exchange, not wishing to concede the initiative after 29 ♖c4 ♗d6, for example: 30 e4 ♘b4 31 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 (but not 31...♖xc8? 32 ♘xb4 ♗xb4 33 ♗a6) 32 ♘xb4 ♗xb4 etc.

29...♗c3! 30 ♘c4! (not 30 bxc3? ♘xc3 31 ♕d2 ♘xb5 32 axb5 b2) **30...♗xd4 31 exd4 ♕c7**



'Although Black has won the exchange for a pawn, the play is double-edged, since White is left with two active bishops.' (Smyslov)

32 ♗g3 ♕a7 33 ♕e5 ♘b4 34 ♘d6 ♖f8 35 ♕e3 ♖ad8 36 ♕c3 ♕e7 37 ♖e1

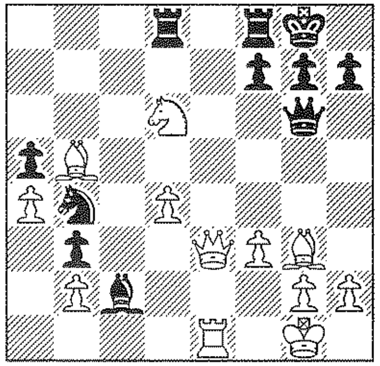
Reshevsky has succeeded in changing the dynamics of the position in his favour, at the same time ridding himself of the problem of his b2-pawn. It would appear that White has sufficient compensation for the exchange: his minor pieces are controlling the board. It is more difficult for Black to play: his rooks have nowhere to expand.

37...♕g5 (37...♕f6 was more circumspect) **38 ♕e3**

The computer (in contrast to previous commentators) suggests the attacking move 38 ♗c4!? Now if 38...♘a2? the very fine combination 39 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 40 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 41 ♕c7+ ♔g8 42 ♖e7 ♖f8 43 h3! (an excellent quiet move: there is no defence against ♗e5; 43 h4? ♕c1+ 44 ♔h2 ♕h6) 43...h6 44 ♗e5 ♖f6 45 h4 ♕g6 46 ♕d8+ ♖f8 47 ♕xa5 proves decisive. Perhaps all that Black has is 38...h6! 39 ♖e5 ♕c1+ 40 ♖e1 ♕g5 with a repetition of moves.

38...♕g6

Smyslov takes a risk in his opponent's time-trouble, avoiding the exchange of queens. After 38...♕xe3+ 39 ♖xe3 ♘d5 40 ♖e1 the domination of the white pieces is maintained.



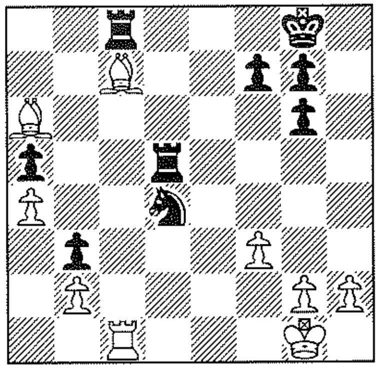
39 ♘e4?

A fatal error, leading to the loss of the d-pawn. Vasily Vasilievich recommends 39 ♘b7! ♖a8 40 ♗d6 ♗f5 41 ♗xb4 axb4 42 ♕xb3 ♗e6 43 d5 ♗h3 44 ♖e2 ♗xg2 45 ♖xg2 ♕b6+ 46 ♔h1 ♕xb7 47 ♗c6 ♕a6 48 ♗xa8

♖xa8 with equality. I agree, but with one correction: in this complicated position there is more chance of finding an improvement somewhere for White.

39...♗xe4 40 ♕xe4 ♘c2 41 ♕xg6 hxg6 42 ♖c1 ♘xd4 43 ♗c7 ♖d5 44 ♗c4 ♖c8! 45 ♗a6

45 ♗xd5? is bad in view of 45...♘e2+, for example: 46 ♔f1 ♘xc1 47 ♗xa5 ♖c5 48 ♗d2 ♖xd5 or 46 ♔f2 ♘xc1 47 ♗xa5 ♖c5 48 ♗d2 ♘d3+. Smyslov's conversion of his material advantage is, as usual, impeccable.



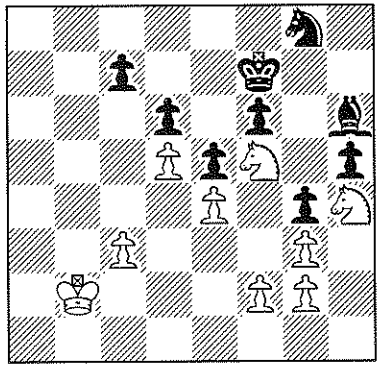
45...♖e8 46 ♔f1 ♘c2 47 ♔g1 ♖e1+ 48 ♖xe1 ♘xe1 49 ♔f2 ♘c2 50 ♔e2 ♖c5 51 ♗g3 ♘b4 52 ♗d3 g5 53 ♗e4 ♖c4 54 ♗e1 ♔f8 55 ♗c3 f6 56 g4 ♔e7 57 ♔d2 ♔d6 58 ♔e2 ♘d5 59 ♗xa5 ♖xa4 60 ♗e1 ♖a2 61 ♔d3 ♖xb2 62 ♔c4 ♖e2 63 ♗g3+ ♘f4 64 ♔xb3 ♖xe4! (not essential, but convincing) **65 fxe4 ♔e5 66 h4 ♔xe4 67 hxg5 fxg5 68 ♔c4 ♔f3 69 ♗e1 ♔xg4 70 ♔d4 ♔f3 71 ♔e5 g4 0-1**

What a fierce battle! Of course, Reshevsky was an inveterate time-trouble sufferer, but in this case he was considerably 'helped' by Smyslov's strong, enterprising play. As a result – another triumph for the 'Soviet Chess School'...!

An important landmark in Smyslov's career was his first international tournament – Groningen 1946. From the results of this event FIDE determined the sixth participant in the forthcoming match-tournament for the world championship (five had already been named: Euwe, Keres, Botvinnik, Reshevsky and Fine).

The debutant began with two wins, but then lost to Botvinnik, who was destroying everyone in turn. Euwe was also playing brilliantly, and before the following game the position of the leaders was as follows: Botvinnik – 6½ out of 7, Euwe – 6, Smyslov – 5. At this sharp moment in the tournament race the young grandmaster succeeded in defeating the ex-world champion.

Game 86
V.Smyslov-M.Euwe
Groningen 1946, 8th round



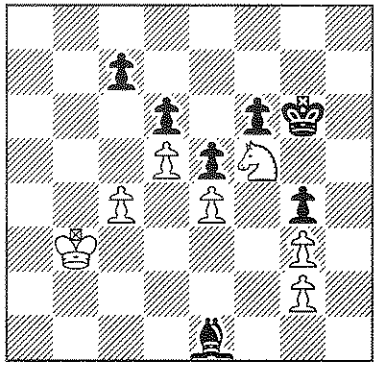
33...♗d2

Black tries to activate his 'bad' bishop and then also his crippled knight. '33...♗g5 34 ♔b3 ♗xh4 35 gxh4 ♘e7 36 ♘xe7 ♔xe7 37 ♔c4 f5 (White wins easily after 37...♔d7 38 ♔b5 and c3-c4-c5) would not have saved him in view of 38 f3! (but not 38 exf5 ♔f6 39 ♔b5 ♔xf5 40 ♔c6 g3! 41 f3 e4! 42 fxe4+ ♔xe4 43 c4 ♔e3 44 ♔xc7 ♔f2 45 c5 ♔xg2 46 cxd6 ♔f3 47 d7 g2 48 d8♕ g1♕) 38...f4 39 ♔b5 ♔d7 40 c4 ♔d8 41 ♔c6 ♔c8 42 c5 dxc5 43 ♔xc5 ♔d7 44 ♔c4 ♔e7 45 ♔b4 ♔d6 46 ♔b5 (Black is in zugzwang) 46...g3 47 ♔b4! ♔c7 (or 47...c6 48 dxc6 ♔xc6 49 ♔c4 ♔d6 50 ♔b5 and wins) 48 ♔c4 ♔d6 49 ♔b5 ♔d7 50 ♔c5 ♔c8 51 d6 and White wins.' (Smyslov)

34 ♔c2 ♗e1 (34...♗g5 35 ♔b3, as in the previous note) **35 f3 ♘e7 36 ♘xe7 ♔xe7 37 fxg4**

According to Smyslov, the immediate 37 ♘f5+ was simpler.

37...hxg4 38 ♘f5+ ♔f7 39 c4 ♔g6 40 ♔b3



40...♔g5

'Passive defence would have prolonged the resistance, but would not have saved the game: 40...♔f7 41 ♔a4 ♔e8 42 ♔b5 ♔d7 43 ♘h6 ♗xg3 44 ♘xg4 ♗h4 45 ♘h6 ♗g5 46 ♘f5 ♗c1 47 ♔a6 ♔c8 48 ♔a7 ♗g5 49 ♔a8 ♗c1 50 g4 (freeing the knight for manoeuvring) 50...♗g5 51 ♘e7+ ♔d7 52 ♘c6 ♔c8 53 ♘a7+ ♔d7 54 ♔b7, or 48...♗d2 49 ♔a8 ♗e1 50 g4 ♗f2 51 ♘e7+ ♔d7 52 ♘g8 ♗h4 53 ♔b8! ♗g5 54 ♔b7 and Black is in zugzwang.' (Smyslov)

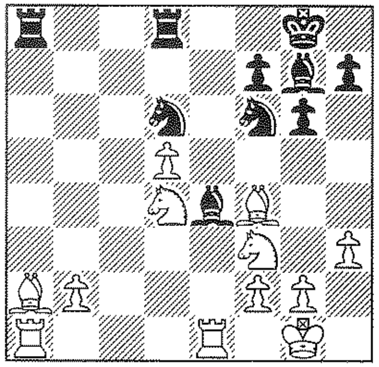
41 ♔a4 ♗xg3 42 ♘xg3 ♔f4 43 ♘h5+ ♔xe4 44 ♘xf6+ ♔f5

Or 44...♔f4 45 ♔b5 e4 (45...♔f5 46 ♘h5 ♔g5 47 ♘g3 ♔f4 48 ♘f1 e4 49 ♔c6 e3 50 ♘xe3 and wins) 46 ♘xe4 ♔xe4 47 ♔c6.

45 ♘e8! e4 46 ♘xc7! e3 47 ♘b5 ♔f4 (or 47...e2 48 ♘d4+ ♔f4 49 ♘xe2+) **48 ♘c3 ♔g3 49 c5 1-0**

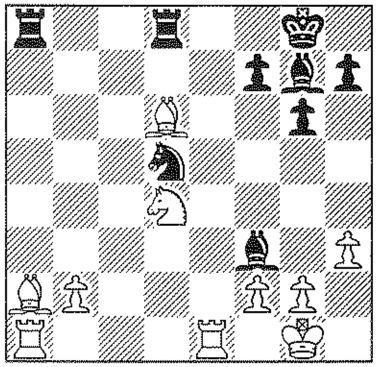
In his remaining games Smyslov slowed down, gaining only two wins with nine draws – however, by no means peaceful ones. At times he would end up on the edge of the abyss and launch into tactical complications, demonstrating amazing resourcefulness.

Game 87
M.Najdorf-V.Smyslov
Groningen 1946, 17th round



It is Black to move. After a mistake in the opening he has lost material and ended up in an indifferent position. Najdorf probably thought that the rest was a matter of technique, and at heart he was preparing to celebrate victory. But the future world champion found a very clever saving combination.

22...♘xd5 23 ♗xd6 ♗xf3



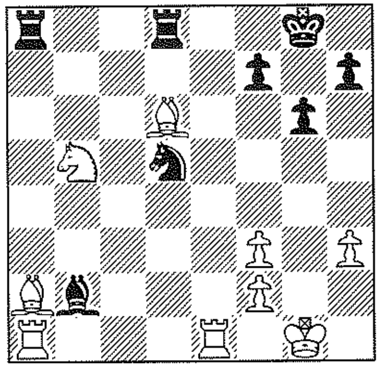
24 ♘b5?

The temptation to win a piece was too great!

Only 24 ♗e5! (24 ♗c5 ♖dc8) was correct, and after 24...♗xe5 25 ♖xe5 ♘b4 26 ♘xf3 ♖xa2 (or 26...♘xa2 27 ♖b5) 27 ♖xa2 ♖d1+ 28

♔h2 ♘xa2 29 ♖c7 White is a healthy passed pawn to the good, which he should be able to convert. But Najdorf, to his misfortune, decided to avoid a protracted endgame...

24...♗xb2! 25 gxf3



25...♘c3!!

Fantastic brilliance! White was expecting 25...♗xa1 26 ♗xd5 ♖a5 27 ♗c4, winning material. Now, however, he only obtains an extra doubled pawn and is forced to reconcile himself to a dead drawn ending.

26 ♘xc3 (or 26 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 27 ♖e7+ ♔g8! 28 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 29 ♘c7 ♖d8 30 ♗e5 ♘e2+ and 31...♗xe5 with a draw) **26...♗xc3 27 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 28 ♖e7+ ♔g8 29 ♖xa8 ♖xa8** with a draw on the 60th move.

In the end Smyslov finished third (behind Botvinnik and Euwe), thus securing a place in the match-tournament for the world championship planned by FIDE.

In the Shadow of Botvinnik

As I have already said, the means of determining the world champion chosen by FIDE after Alekhine's death was far from irreproachable. For example, Bronstein – the winner of the 1948 and 1949 USSR Championships, the 1948 Interzonal and the entire subsequent cycle – is convinced that it would have been correct to declare Euwe world champion and not to stage a match-tournament in the spring of 1948, but first an Interzonal, then, six months later, a Candidates tournament (to which Botvinnik, Keres, Fine, Reshevsky and Smyslov would be personally invited), and then a traditional match for the world championship.

However, FIDE, the Soviet Chess Federation, and Botvinnik were aiming for a simple and rapid solution to the problem. A characteristic feature: when at the congress in The Hague (1947) it transpired that Fine would not be playing in the match-tournament, they did not even bother to find a replacement, but simply reduced the number of players to five and added an extra, fifth cycle. It was unfair that Miguel Najdorf, who was playing brilliantly at that time, was not included in the match-tournament: he finished fourth in Groningen 1946, and moreover bet Flohr 500 guilders that he would defeat Botvinnik in the last round – and won! 'But why didn't they include Boleslavsky, who was runner-up in two successive USSR Championships (1945 and 1947)? 'God himself ordered that he be included,' thinks Bronstein. 'Isaak never complained to me: he also understood that he possessed some shortcomings in the eyes of Botvinnik, and perhaps, unfortunately, also of society... I am not saying that Boleslavsky, Najdorf or I would have won the Candidates tournament, but, of course, the results would have been different. The reason why Botvinnik was in a hurry to play the match-tournament was that things had been difficult for Keres during the war, and he was all nerves, Reshevsky had played only in weak tournaments in America, and Euwe had not played chess at all...'

As for Smyslov, he was not yet sufficiently experienced to provide serious competition to his formidable compatriot in the 1948 The Hague/Moscow match-tournament. But to fight for second place was well within his powers, especially since Euwe had declined sharply. After two cycles the 'East-West' battlefield looked like this: Botvinnik – 6 out of 8; Reshevsky – 4½; Keres and Smyslov – 4; Euwe – 1½. As has already been mentioned, the Kremlin was seriously concerned by the question: suppose the American Reshevsky were to become world champion?!

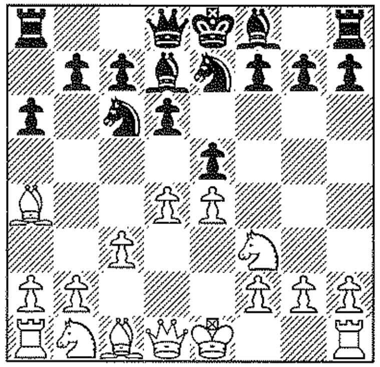
Two weeks later(!) in Moscow, in the Hall of Columns of the House of Soviets, the third cycle began. Botvinnik was resting that day, Keres was beating Euwe, and Smyslov was solving the 'Reshevsky problem'.

Game 88

V.Smyslov-S.Reshevsky

World Championship Match-Tournament,
The Hague/Moscow 1948
Ruy Lopez C75

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 d6 5 c3 ♘e7 6 d4 ♗d7



'This interesting plan is very old. It was frequently employed by the world champion Steinitz, who usually omitted 3...a6 4 ♗a4,' writes Keres, who won in this rather unusual way against Euwe in the first round. Black subordinates the development of his pieces to the over-protection of his e5-pawn.

7 ♗b3 h6 (preventing ♘g5) **8 ♘bd2** (8 ♘h4!? was also one of Smyslov's inventions!) **8...♘g6 9 ♘c4**

Disclosing the drawback to Black's set-up: the knight is aiming for the weakened d5-square.

9...♗e7 10 0-0

Fischer introduced the immediate 10 ♘e3!, in order to answer 10...♗g5 with 11 ♘xg5 hxg5 12 g3. The idea of this variation is illustrated by the game Sax-Portisch (Skelleftea 1989): 12...exd4!? 13 cxd4 ♔f8 (in order to play ...♕f6, without fearing ♘d5) 14 0-0 ♗h3 15 ♕f3 ♕d7 16 ♖d1 ♖e8, and here instead of 17 ♘f5? g4 18 ♕e3 ♖h5! 19 ♘h4 ♖xh4 20 gxh4 ♘xh4, winning, White could have retained the advantage with 17 ♗c2! followed by b2-b3 and ♗b2.

10...0-0

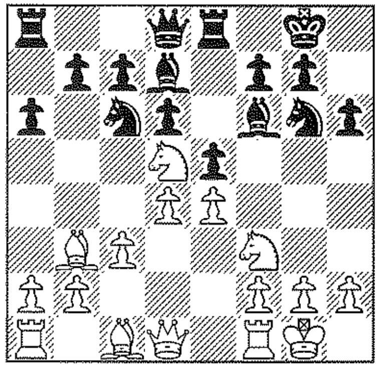
Later they began playing 10...♗g5!, hoping to use the rook for an attack on the h-file in the event of 11 ♘xg5 hxg5 (as in the Sax-Portisch game given above), while if 11 ♘e3, then 11...♗xe3 12 ♗xe3 0-0 etc.

11 ♘e3 ♗f6

11...♖e8 is better, and after 12 ♖e1 (12 ♘d5 ♗f8; 12 ♘f5!? ♗f8 13 ♗c2) 12...♗f8 13 ♗c2 ♘h4 14 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 15 ♘d5 White has only a slight advantage (Bronstein-Keres, Moscow 1948). Alternatively, 11...♔h7?! (with the idea of 12 ♘d5 f5!) is parried by 12 g3! ♗f6 13 ♖e1 ♔h8 14 a3 ♕e8 15 h4! (Fischer-Olafsson, Yugoslavia Candidates 1959).

12 ♘d5 ♖e8?

In trying to strengthen the variation, Black makes a serious mistake. Keres's choice in the aforementioned game with Euwe was safer: 12...exd4 13 ♘xd4 ♖e8, although after 14 ♗c2 White nevertheless has the better chances.



13 dxe5! ♗xe5

Sadly necessary, since after 13...♘gxe5 (13...dxe5? 14 ♘xf6+ is obviously bad) 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 f4 ♗f6 16 e5! White has a very strong attack: 16...♗e7 (but not 16...dxe5? 17 ♘xf6+ gxf6 18 ♕h5) 17 ♕h5 ♗e6 18 ♗e3! dxe5 19 ♖ad1 with the sequel 19...exf4 20 ♘xf4 ♗d6 21 ♘xe6 fxe6 22 ♗xh6! or 19...♗d6 20 f5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♕f6 22 g4! ♗e7 23 h4! ♕xh4 24 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 25 ♕xh4 ♗xh4 26 ♗xe8 and wins.

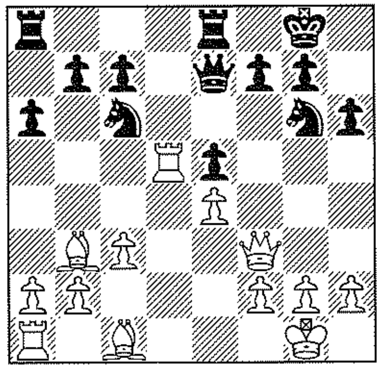
14 ♘xe5 dxe5

No one has commented on this capture, although the lesser evil was probably 14...♘gxe5!? 15 h3 (15 f4 ♘g4) 15...♗e6 16 f4 ♘d7 – White certainly has the advantage here, but Black's defensive lines are more flexible than in the game. Now, however, the pawns are fixed, and Smyslov converts his advantage (powerful knight, two bishops, open d-file) very comfortably.

15 ♕f3 ♗e6

The d5-knight is too strong! 'Black could have gained a defensible position by 15...♘a5 16 ♗c2 c6 17 ♘e3 ♗e6 18 ♖d1 ♕c7.' (Keres) But Smyslov does not agree with this: 18 ♘f5! ♕c7 19 ♕g4 ♔h7 20 h4! f6 21 h5 ♘f8 22 b3 with a great advantage to White.

16 ♖d1 ♗xd5 17 ♖xd5 (complete comfort!) **17...♕e7**



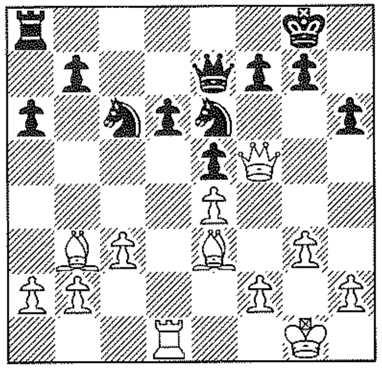
18 ♕f5! ♘f8

The only move: 18...♕e6? is met by 19 ♖d7, while 18...♖ad8? is not possible on account of 19 ♗xh6! (but not 19 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20 ♕xg6?? ♖d1+) 19...gxh6 (19...♖xd5 20 ♗xd5) 20 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 21 ♕xg6+.

19 ♗e3 ♘e6 20 ♖ad1 ♖ed8 21 g3

There is no hurry, and for now White restricts the mobility of the enemy knights.

21...♖d6 (in trying to reduce the pressure on the d-file, Reshevsky allows the creation of a backward pawn on d6) **22 ♖xd6 cxd6**



23 ♕g4! (with the obvious threat of ♗xh6) **23...♔h8**

'23...♔f8 was correct, at the same time defending his queen and the f7-pawn.' (Keres)

But, according to Smyslov, 23...♔f8 also had its drawbacks: 24 ♗b6 (threatening 25 ♗xe6 fxe6 26 ♕f3+ ♔g8 27 ♕d3!) 24...♘c7 25 ♕f5 (with the threats of ♕xf7+ and ♖xd6) 25...♘e8 26 ♕h7 ♘f6 27 ♕h8+ ♘g8 28 ♖d3 and ♖f3, winning. And if 24...♖e8 the move 25 h4 appeals to me – it is not apparent what Black can do next.

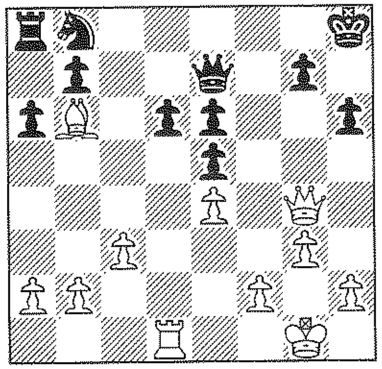
24 ♗b6! (preparing a frontal attack on the d6-pawn by ♖d2 and ♕d1) **24...♘b8?!**

It is also inadequate to play 24...♖c8 25 ♖d2 ♘b8 26 ♕d1 ♖c6 (or 26...♘c5 27 ♗c2 ♖c6? 28 ♗xc5 dxc5 29 ♖d8+) 27 ♗a7 ♘d7 28 ♗d5 ♖c7 29 ♗xe6 etc.

Keres recommended 24...♘c7 'with a tenacious defence', but after this Smyslov 'was intending 25 ♕f3 ♖f8 26 ♕d3 ♘e8 27 ♗a4 with inevitable loss of material for Black.'

The attempt to drive away the bishop by ...♘d7 encounters an unexpected tactical refutation.

25 ♗xe6! (by exchanging his strong bishop, White very subtly exploits the uncoordinated state of the Black pieces) **25...fxe6**



26 ♕h4!

A splendid move, winning the d6-pawn, and with it the game. 26 ♕f3!? ♘d7 (26...♘c6 27 ♕d3) 27 ♗c7 was also strong (Dvoretsky).

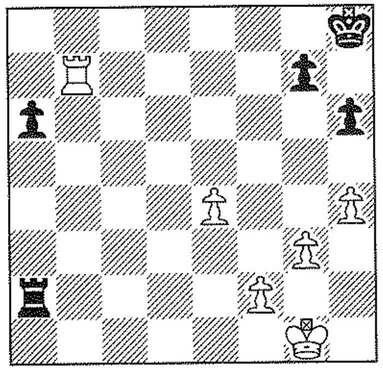
26...♕d7 (or 26...♕xh4 27 gxh4 and ♖xd6) **27 ♕d8+**

'A rare instance of the harmonious coordination of White's pieces in the opponent's rear, which logically results from his systematic strategy. It is here that the weakness of the back rank tells!' (Smyslov)

27...♕xd8 28 ♗xd8 ♘d7 29 ♗c7 ♘c5 30 ♖xd6 ♖c8 (30...♘xe4 31 ♖xe6) **31 ♗b6 ♘a4 32 ♖xe6 ♘xb2 33 ♖xe5 ♘c4**

If 33...♖xc3, then 34 ♗d4 ♖c2 35 ♖e7.

34 ♖e6 ♘xb6 35 ♖xb6 ♖xc3 36 ♖xb7 ♖c2 37 h4! ♖xa2



By defending tenaciously, Reshevsky has avoided a rapid loss and has obtained an endgame where he is 'only' a pawn down. However, White's kingside pawns are irresistible.

38 ♔g2 a5 39 h5 a4 40 ♖a7 (according to Keres, 40 ♖b8+ ♔h7 41 ♖a8 was simpler) **40...♔g8 41 g4 a3 42 ♔g3 ♖e2** (42...♔f8 43 f3 ♖a1 44 ♔f4 a2 45 e5 would have led to a position from the game) **43 ♔f3**

Not allowing the exchange of his passed pawn for the a-pawn.

43...♖a2 44 ♔e3 ♔f8 45 f3 ♖a1 46 ♔f4 (under the cover of its infantry, the king penetrates into the enemy position) **46...a2**

Otherwise 47 ♔f5 and f3-f4.

47 e5 ♔g8 (or 47...♔e8 48 ♔f5 ♖f1 49 ♖xa2 ♖xf3+ 50 ♔e6 ♔d8 51 ♖a7) **48 ♔f5 ♖f1 49 ♖xa2 ♖xf3+ 50 ♔g6 ♔f8 51 ♖a8+ ♔e7 52 ♖a7+ 1-0**

A wonderful example of Smyslov's play: the familiar deceptive simplicity, the bewitching study-like style. It is understandable why one of the brightest talents of his time, Samuel Reshevsky – the famous 'Polish wunderkind'! – was unable to break through the line of leading Soviet grandmasters...

(In June 1991 I observed an unusual rapidplay match between the 70-year-old Smyslov and the 80-year-old Reshevsky at the USSR Central Chess Club. Believe me, the standard of play was very high and this splendid battle ended with a score of 2-2 – without any draws! It was touching to see the pleasure gained by Reshevsky. Chess remained his only love. 'I still want to play and play!' he joked that day, and after visiting the museum in the Central Chess Club, he wrote in the book of honoured guests: 'It is here that I realise for the first time that I have not lived my life in vain!' Ten months later, on 4 April 1992, Sammy passed away...)

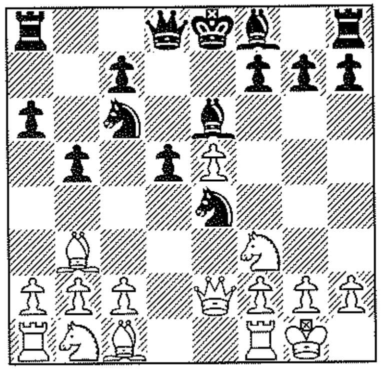
In the third cycle of the match-tournament some miracles occurred: Smyslov and Keres both lost to Botvinnik with White, while the indefatigable Reshevsky defeated him with

Black! In the fourth cycle Keres began to 'drift', losing to all three of his rivals. Botvinnik pulled well ahead, but the battle for second place became extremely fierce: before the 19th round Reshevsky had 7½ out of 14, and Keres and Smyslov – 7½ out of 15. And at this point Reshevsky lost with White to Botvinnik, whereas Smyslov landed an accurately-calculated knock-out blow against Euwe.

This game, like those with Reshevsky from the USSR-USA radio match given earlier, as well as many wins by Botvinnik, demonstrate the superiority of the 'Soviet Chess School', particularly in the opening. Euwe was crushed in his favourite lines: by Botvinnik in the Meran (*Game No.50*) and by Smyslov in the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez. The former world champion was an expert on these openings – in the 1930s. And he was no longer able to combat the new ideas, the new generation...

Game 89
V.Smyslov-M.Euwe
World Championship Match-Tournament,
The Hague/Moscow 1948
Ruy Lopez C81

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 (in Groningen 1946 Smyslov deferred the discussion, playing 5 d3) **5...♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 ♕e2**



Keres's move, which was popular in this match-tournament. The main line was 9 c3 (*Game No.84*), while 9 ♘bd2 (*Game No.118*) had not yet come into fashion.

9...♘c5?!

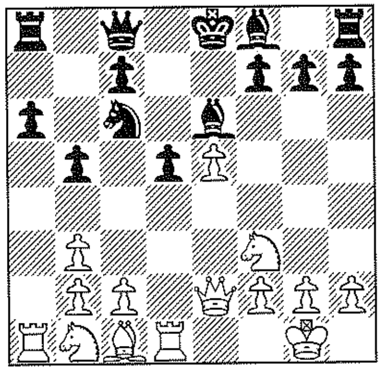
An attempt to improve Black's play compared with the game Keres-Euwe (16th round), where after 9...♗e7 10 ♖d1 0-0 11 c4 bxc4 12 ♗xc4 ♗c5 13 ♗e3 ♗xe3 14 ♕xe3 ♕b8 15 ♗b3 ♘a5 16 ♘bd2 ♘xd2?! 17 ♖xd2 ♘xb3 18 axb3 White gained the advantage. However, a genuine improvement was demonstrated 18 years later by Korchnoi: 16...♕a7! with equality. Therefore in the game Karpov-Korchnoi (Baguio 12th matchgame 1978) White preferred 16 ♘e1, but here too after 16...♕b6 17 ♕xb6 cxb6 18 f3 ♘xb3 19 axb3 ♘c5 20 b4 ♘d7 21 ♘d3, in Smyslov's opinion, 21...a5!? would have equalised.

10 ♖d1 ♘xb3?!

It is also not good to play 10...b4?! 11 ♗e3 ♘xb3 12 axb3 ♕c8 13 c4! (Smyslov-Reshevsky, 21st round). Later Euwe upheld 10...♗e7 with the sequel 11 ♗e3 0-0 12 c4 bxc4 13 ♗xc4 ♘a5 or 11 c4 d4! 12 cxb5 d3, which at least looks more interesting.

11 axb3 ♕c8

Black appears to be alright, but an unpleasant surprise awaits him here.



12 c4!

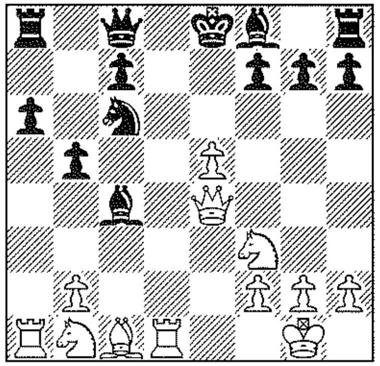
An excellent pawn sacrifice, demolishing the opponent's centre. The game Keres-Reshevsky from the previous round went 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗h4 ♗c5 14 ♘c3? g5 15 ♗g3 ♕b7! 16 ♘xd5 0-0-0! with advantage to Black. Keres's suggestion of 14 c4! bxc4 15 bxc4 dxc4 16 ♕e4 would have been much more energetic – it is something similar (but immediately!) that Smyslov puts into effect.

12...dxc4

'Comparatively better chances of a defence were offered by 12...bxc4 13 bxc4 ♘b4, although after 14 ♘c3! White retains a significant advantage (14...dxc4 15 ♗g5 ♘d3 16 b3). On the other hand, it is unacceptable for Black to decline the pawn sacrifice, for the reason that his system of development was aimed precisely at the prevention of c2-c4; if White can nevertheless make this advance with impunity, Black's entire system of defence must be deemed unsuccessful.' (Keres)

I should mention that 12...♘b4 13 cxb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 is also insufficient, not because of Keres's recommendation 15 ♕xb5+ c6 16 ♕b6 (White's extra pawn does not play any particular role), but in view of 15 ♗d2! c6 16 ♘d4 ♘a6 17 b4 ♘c7 (or 17...♗e7 18 ♖c1 ♘b8 19 f4 ♕a7 20 ♕f2) 18 ♖c1 ♗d7 19 ♕d3 ♘e6 20 ♘c3 with appreciable pressure (20...♗xb4? 21 ♘xd5!).

13 bxc4 ♗xc4 14 ♕e4



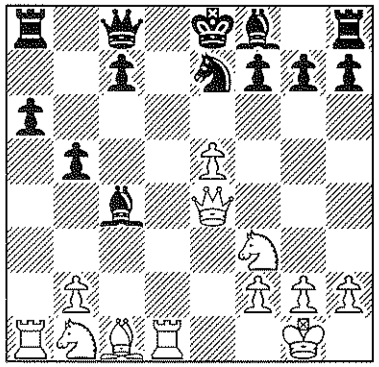
14...♘e7?

The decisive mistake. 'Black's position was by no means as hopeless as most of the commentators thought,' wrote Keres, and he suggested two ways of making things more difficult for White:

1) 14...♘b4 15 ♗g5 ♗c5 (15...c6 16 ♖d8+) 16 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 17 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 'with quite good defensive resources' – but White can improve with 16 ♘a3! (Smyslov) or 15 ♘a3! ♗b3 16 ♘xb5 ♗xd1 17 ♘xc7+ ♕xc7 18 ♕xa8+ ♔d7 19 ♗g5 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 with an attack (Gipslis-Haag, Pec 1964);

2) 14...♕b7 (14...♕e6? 15 ♖d6! etc.) 15 ♘c3, 'and now not 15...♗b3 16 e6! fxe6 17 ♗g5 with a winning attack (*although this still has to be demonstrated; thus, 17 ♘g5 ♗xd1 18 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 19 ♕f7+ ♔d8 is unclear – G.K.*), but more modestly 15...♖b8, and Black's defensive resources cannot be underestimated.' (Smyslov) After this Smyslov gives 16 e6! ♗xe6 17 ♘g5 ♘d8 (*or 17...♗e7 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 ♕xe6 ♖d8 20 ♗g5 ♖d6 21 ♕e4 – G.K.*) 18 ♖xd8+! ♔xd8 19 ♘xe6+ fxe6 20 ♕xe6 ♗e7 21 ♗g5! with the threat of 22 ♖d1+. I would add that 20...h6 21 ♗f4 ♗d6 also does not help in view of 22 ♗xd6 cxd6 23 ♕xd6+ ♔e8 24 ♖e1+ ♔f7 25 ♕e6+ ♔f8 26 ♘d5 ♕f7 27 ♕d6+. However, after 16 e6! it is also necessary to consider 16...fxe6, choosing between Smyslov's laconic 17 ♕g4 'with an attack' and 17 ♘g5 e5 18 ♘xh7.

In any case, after 14...♕b7 the win for White is by no means so obvious as in the game.



15 ♘a3!

'Apparently Euwe overlooked this move. Now if 15...♗b3 there follows 16 ♖d3 ♗e6 17 ♘xb5 ♗f5 18 ♘xc7+. Therefore Black is forced to give back his extra pawn, remaining in a bad position without any material compensation.' (Smyslov)

15...c6 16 ♘xc4 bxc4 17 ♕xc4 ♕b7

Or 17...♕e6 18 ♖xa6! ♕xc4 19 ♖xa8+ ♘c8 20 ♖xc8+ ♔e7 21 ♖c7+ etc.

18 e6! f6 19 ♖d7 ♕b5 20 ♕xb5 cxb5 21 ♘d4 (with the threat of ♘xb5) **21...♖c8 22 ♗e3 ♘g6 23 ♖xa6 ♘e5 24 ♖b7 ♗c5 25 ♘f5 0-0** (25...♗xe3 26 ♘d6+) **26 h3! 1-0**

If 26...g6 (26...♗xe3 27 ♘e7+) 27 ♘h6+ ♔h8 28 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 29 ♖aa7.

'A theoretically valuable game, which, however, does not give any impression of the strength of Smyslov's novelty, since Euwe defended very weakly.' (Keres) What can be done? In earlier days too, when Euwe encountered a surprise in the opening, he often became flustered and lost quickly. But this game is a vivid indication of the progress of chess thinking: whereas the former world champion relied on static factors (say, the two bishops, which displayed their strength in the preceding Keres-Reshevsky game) in his favourite variation, his young opponent, like the other Soviet grandmasters, approached the resolution of opening problems in a far more concrete fashion.

The meeting of these same opponents in the last cycle was a triumph for a variation that had only just been invented by Smyslov.

Game 90

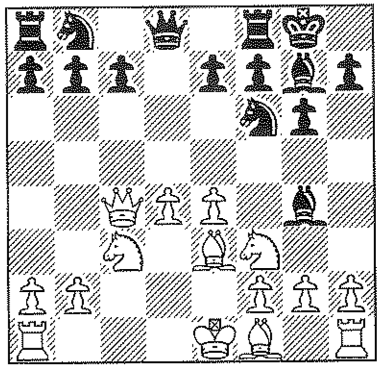
M.Euwe-V.Smyslov

World Championship Match-Tournament,
The Hague/Moscow 1948
Grünfeld Defence D98

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3

This thrust was considered to be White's most formidable weapon since the time of the 12th game of the Euwe-Alekhine match (Holland 1935).

5...dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♗g4 (more usual at present is 7...♘a6 or Alekhine's 7...a6 – *Game No.12*) **8 ♗e3**



8...♘fd7!

An unexpected and far from obvious reply, which is hard to explain from the position of the old classical school. But the Grünfeld opening itself was a product of the new chess era, and Smyslov realised that only something extraordinary could help Black carry out the main idea of the opening – a pawn attack on the strong enemy centre. By opening the diagonal for his g7-bishop, driving back the white queen (by ...♘d7-b6) and developing the other knight at c6, he sets up pressure on the d-file, and in the event of d4-d5 he can undermine the centre with ...c7-c6 and ...f7-f5.

However, great accuracy is required of Black: Botvinnik, who twice risked employing the Smyslov Variation against its creator – in the sixth game of the 1957 match and the 11th game of the 1958 return match, suffered an opening catastrophe after both 9 0-0-0!? (*Game No.110*), and 9 ♖d1 (*Game No.113*).

9 ♕b3 (9 ♗e2 – *Game No.77*) **9...♘b6 10 a4?!**

The continuation of a theoretical duel. The game Keres-Smyslov (12th round) went 10 ♖d1! e5?! 11 dxe5 (11 ♗e2!) 11...♘8d7 12 ♗e2 ♕e7 13 ♗g5 (13 h3!?) 13...♕e8 14 0-0 ♘xe5 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 exd5 ♘xf3+ 17 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♕d7 with equality. But modern theory begins with 10...♘c6 11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 13 gxf3 ♗h5 – this key position was actively tested over the course of many years, but in the 1990s it almost went out of use: possibly players began avoiding it on account of its excessive sharpness.

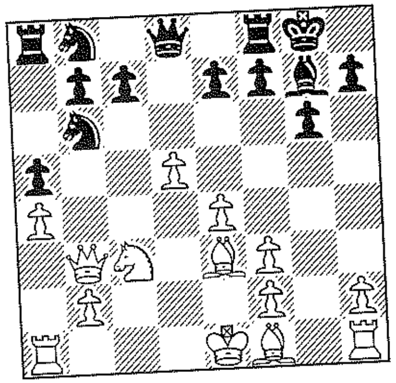
However, the variation in general has retained the high reputation that it acquired precisely after the present game. In trying to improve White's play, Euwe underestimated the importance of the weakening of the b4-square.

10...a5! 11 d5 (after 11 ♖d1 ♘c6 the inclusion of the moves a2-a4 and ...a7-a5 is to Black's advantage) **11...♗xf3!**

The correct plan, which was discovered in the course of the tournament. The game Euwe-Smyslov from the 14th round went 11...♘a6?! 12 ♗e2 e6?! 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 exd5 15 exd5 ♕h4? 16 ♘e4! ♖ae8 17 g3 ♕d8 18 d6 ♘c8 19 dxc7 ♕xc7 20 0-0 with a great advantage to White.

12 gxf3

Having forestalled ...e7-e6 and ...c7-c6, White was hoping to exploit the poor position of the knight at b6, but Smyslov now finds a way to gain excellent counterplay.



12...♕d6!

'An excellent position for the queen, from where it can to go b4. Euwe thought for a long time over his reply and found an active continuation.' (Smyslov)

13 ♘b5 ♕b4+ 14 ♕xb4 axb4 15 ♘xc7

'15 a5?! is unfavourable in view of 15...♗xb2 16 ♖a2 (16 ♖b1 ♘a4) 16...♗e5 17 f4 ♗d6 18 e5 b3!' (Smyslov) The machine also considers 15 ♖c1 ♘xa4 16 b3 ♘c3 17 ♘xc7 ♖a2 with some advantage to Black.

15...♖xa4 16 ♖b1 (it is clearly worse to play 16 ♖xa4?! ♘xa4 17 b3 ♘c3) **16...♘6d7 17 ♘b5 ♖c8 18 ♗e2**

Both Keres and Smyslov correctly recommend 18 ♘d4!, for example: 18...b3 19 ♘xb3 ♖b4 20 ♘d2 ♖xb2 21 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 22 ♔e2 with approximate equality.

18...b3! (now White is forced onto the defensive) **19 ♘a3!**

But not 19 ♗d1?! ♘a6 or 19 0-0?! ♖c2 20 ♗d1 ♖xb2, and 21 ♗xb3? is not possible on account of 21...♖b4.

19...♗xb2

'A crucial decision. Euwe was hoping with the help of the two bishops to regain the b3-pawn and obtain the better ending. Such is the great belief in our time in the advantage of the two bishops! Here it is interesting to recall that Chigorin used to conduct a successful fight with two knights. In chess there are no indisputable laws that are suitable for every position, as otherwise the game would lose its lasting attraction.' (Smyslov)

Incidentally, 19...e6?! 20 dxe6 fxe6 21 0-0 is dubious for Black, who then has to concern himself not with how to gain an advantage, but with how to equalise: 21...♗xb2 22 ♘b5 (22 ♘c4 ♗f6 23 ♖xb3 ♖axc4 24 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 25 ♖xb7 is unclear) 22...♖c2 23 ♗d1 ♖a2 24 ♘d6 ♘c6 25 ♘c4 ♗d4 26 ♗xc2 ♖xc2 27 ♘a3 etc.

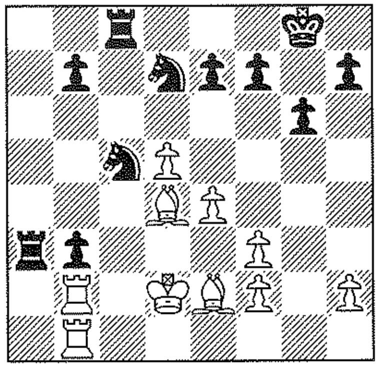
20 ♖xb2 ♖xa3 21 ♔d2

'After 21 ♗d1 there would have followed 21...♘c5 (*21...♖c3 22 ♔d2 or 21...♘e5 22 ♖xb3 ♘xf3+ 23 ♔e2 ♖xb3 24 ♗xb3 ♘e5 25 ♖b1 – Keres*) 22 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 23 ♖xb3 ♖xb3 24 ♗xb3 ♖c1+ (24...♖c3 25 ♗d1) 25 ♗d1 ♘d7 when Black retains the advantage.' (Smyslov) Although after 26 ♔d2 ♖a1 27 ♔c3 and ♔b2 the most probable outcome is a draw.

21...♘a6 22 ♖hb1 ♘ac5 23 ♗d4

'Probably simpler was 23 ♗d1 ♖a2 24 ♖xa2 bxa2 25 ♖a1 ♖a8 26 ♔c3, sooner or later winning the dangerous a2-pawn.' (Keres) Smyslov continues the variation: 26...e6 27 dxe6 fxe6 28 ♗c2 b6, 'and if 29 ♔b2, then 29...♘e5, when again Black retains a positional advantage.'

Keres also gives 23 ♗b5 ♘e5 24 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 25 ♖xb3 ♘xf3+ 26 ♔e3 ♖xb5 (26...♖c3+ 27 ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 28 ♗d3!) 27 ♖xa3 ♖xb1 28 ♔xf3, 'and with careful play White should be able to gain a draw.' But according to Smyslov, after 28...f6 29 ♖c3 h5 30 ♖c7 ♔f8 'Black retains his extra pawn, with winning chances.'

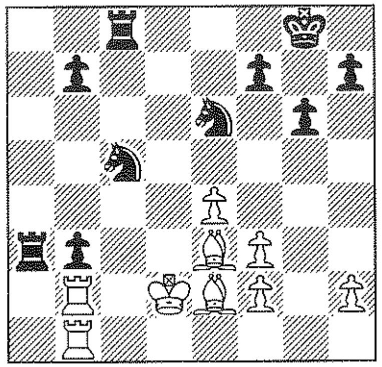


23...e5! 24 dxe6?

In my view, a serious mistake (as, however, is 24 ♗xc5? ♘xc5 25 ♗d1 ♖a2 26 ♖xa2 bxa2 27 ♖a1 ♖a8 with good winning chances). Keres recommended 24 ♗e3 f5 25 exf5 gxf5 26 d6 (26 f4 exf4 27 ♗xf4 ♖a4 etc.) 'with dangerous threats', but Smyslov parries this by 26...f4 27 ♗c4+ ♔g7 28 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 29 ♗xb3 ♖c6, and the computer – by the immediate 26...♖c6! 27 ♔c3 ♖a5 with an obvious advantage to Black.

It would appear that the best chance is 24 ♗c3! After this there is a choice between 24...♖a2 (24...♘a4? 25 ♗b4; 24...♘b6?! 25 ♗b4 ♖a2 26 ♔e1! ♖xb2 27 ♖xb2 ♘ba4 28 ♖b1) 25 ♗b5 f6 26 ♗b4 (26 ♔e2?! ♘b6) 26...f5 27 exf5 gxf5 28 d6 ♔f8 (here after 29 ♔e3 it would appear that White should be able to hold on) and Smyslov's recommendation 24...f5 25 exf5 gxf5 26 ♗b5 b6, retaining the extra pawn (27 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 28 ♖xb3 ♖xb3 29 ♖xb3 ♖c5).

24...♘xe6 25 ♗e3 ♘dc5



26 ♗xc5?!

This makes things easier for Black. Keres suggested the 'very strong' 26 ♗c4, and after 26...♘xe4+! (26...♖d8+ 27 ♗d5; 26...♘a4 27 ♗xe6) 27 fxe4 ♖xc4 28 ♔d3 (28 ♖xb3? ♖xb3 29 ♖xb3 ♖xe4 30 ♖xb7 ♖h4 and wins) 28...♖b4 29 f3 'it is highly probable that the threat of 30 ♔c3 ♖b5 31 ♔c4 will give White adequate chances of a successful defence.' Smyslov disputes this, giving the variation 29...f5 30 ♔c3 ♖b5 31 exf5 gxf5 32 ♖xb3 ♖bxb3+ 33 ♖xb3 ♖xb3+ 34 ♔xb3 f4 35 ♗d2 ♔f7 with the advance of the king to f5. But in my opinion, the rook ending after 29...b5 30 ♔c3 ♖c4+ 31 ♔d3 ♘c5+ 32 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 33 ♖xb3 ♖xb3+ 34 ♖xb3 ♖h5 is also very difficult for White.

26...♘xc5 27 ♔c3

Nevertheless it was more tenacious to play 27 ♔e3!? (but not 27 ♗d1 ♖d8+ or 27 ♗c4 ♘a4 28 ♖xb3 ♖a2+) 27...♖d8 28 ♗c4 ♔g7 29 ♗d5 (29 ♔e2? ♘a4 and wins), although here too things are not easy for White after 29...b6.

27...♖a4 (27...♘a4+? 28 ♔b4) **28 ♔d2 ♔g7!**

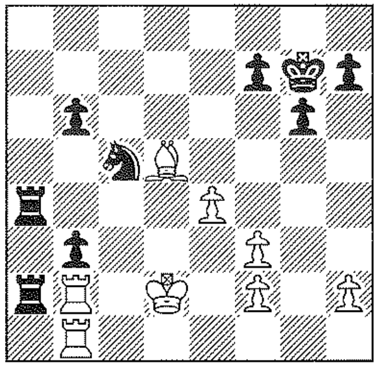
'A good positional move. Black plays his king to a dark square, indirectly supporting his passed pawn.' (Smyslov)

29 ♔e3 ♖d8 30 ♖c1 (30 ♗d1 ♖a3; 30 ♖d1 ♖xd1 31 ♗xd1 ♔f6 32 ♔d2? ♖a2) **30...b6 31 ♗c4 ♖da8** (31...g5 followed by ...♔f6 is also good) **32 ♗d5**

The point of Black's 28th move is revealed: 32 ♗xb3? ♖b4 33 ♖c3 ♖a3 and wins.

32...♖a2 33 ♖cb1 ♖8a4 34 ♔d2

34 f4! was slightly better. Now Black forces a win with the help of an elegant 'little combination'.



34...♖d4+ 35 ♔e2

'Or 35 ♔c3 ♖xd5 36 exd5 ♘a4+ with a won pawn endgame, while after 35 ♔e3 ♖d3+ 36 ♔e2 ♖xb2+ 37 ♖xb2 g5 the manoeuvre ...♔g7-f6-e5-d4 wins easily.' (Keres)

35...♘a4! 36 ♖xa2 bxa2 37 ♖a1 (or 37 ♗xa2 ♘c3+ 38 ♔e3 ♖a4 39 ♗b3 ♖a3) **37...♘c3+ 38 ♔e3** (38 ♔e1 ♖b4 39 ♗xa2 ♖a4) **38...♖d1 0-1**

Since that same day Reshevsky lost to Botvinnik, this win secured Smyslov a more than honourable second place in this historic event. Although he lost his mini-matches to Botvinnik and Keres (2-3), he made up for this against Reshevsky (3-2) and Euwe (4-1).

A year and a half later Smyslov, together with Bronstein, won the 17th USSR Championship (Moscow 1949), but in the following spring he lost (for several years) the status of No.2 in the chess world, finishing behind Bronstein and Boleslavsky in the 1950 Candidates tournament. But then he got down to business, apparently remembering how in 1935 a school friend had asked him: 'Vasya, would you like to be Alekhine?' – and Vasya replied: 'The loser – no!'

Like us when we are Black

From his youth Vasily Vasilievich was guided by an uncompromising chess philosophy: 'I am a staunch supporter of classical clarity of thought. The content of a game should be a search for truth, and victory a demonstration of its rightness. No imagination, however rich, no technique, however masterly, no penetration into the psychology of the opponent, however deep, can make a chess game a work of art, if these qualities do not lead to the main goal – the search for truth.' Every move had to be subject to this aim, and tactical blows had to be landed only if the position demanded this.

It was in accordance with his general aims that Smyslov built his opening repertoire, devoting particular attention to play with Black. He as though followed the favourite saying of grandmaster Boleslavsky: 'Like us when we are Black,' the chess pieces ask, 'when we are White everyone likes us!' His contribution to theory is no less significant than that of Botvinnik, although the services of the sixth champion are usually rated higher: after all, it was he who made a revolutionary breakthrough in the field of the opening, sharply expanding Black's possibilities of fighting for the initiative from the very first moves. Smyslov did not disclaim such possibilities either, but in general his approach to the opening was completely different. Rather than the immediate disruption of the equilibrium, he preferred long-term strategy, by which Black, avoiding early exchanges, gradually prepared the ground for launching a counterattack.

I will mention some of his favourite schemes, which have remained in modern opening theory.

Ruy Lopez

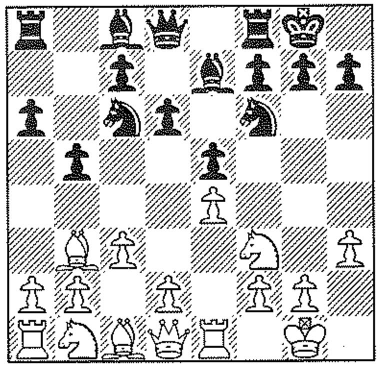
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6

Another Spanish 'hobby-horse' of Smyslov is the old variation with 3...g6!? (this was played long ago by Steinitz and Pillsbury). Vasily Vasilievich successfully employed it in the 1970s-

1990s. One can recall his wins over Tal (Biel Interzonal 1976) and Beliavsky (Montpellier Candidates 1985), his draw with Anand (Groningen 1989), and in the 1990s – fighting draws with Psakhis, Judit and Sofia Polgar, Sutovsky...

4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3

One of the most popular opening positions of the last century.



For many years it was thought that Black's choice was restricted to the immediate removal of the knight from c6 followed by ...c7-c5. Without exception, almost everyone, including Smyslov, played the classical Chigorin System – **9...♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7** (11...♘c6 and 11...cxd4 were also played) **12 ♘bd2 ♖e8**, **12...♗d7** or **12...♘c6**, and sometimes also the Breyer Variation, which was somewhat eccentric for those times – **9...♘b8 10 d4 ♘bd7** with the intention of ...♗b7, ...♖e8 and ...♗f8 (later it was successfully employed by Spassky).

However, Smyslov was not satisfied with this, and he devised three new variations:

1) 9...♘d7!? 10 d4 ♗f6 (10...♘b6 – Game No. 123)

An original attempt to hinder the standard manoeuvre ♘b1-d2-f1 and to maintain the stronghold on e5. In the source game Yudovich-Smyslov (Moscow 1943) Black achieved an excellent position after **11 ♗e3 ♘e7 12 ♘bd2 ♗b7 13 ♕e2?! c5 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 ♔h2 c4 16 ♗c2 ♘g6 17 ♘f1 ♕c7**. Later this variation was tested at the very highest level, including matches for the World Championship, for example, **11...♘a5 12 ♗c2 ♘c4** with equality (Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow 21st matchgame 1969). The most unpleasant for Black would appear to be **11 a4! ♗b7 12 ♘a3** (Kasparov-Karpov, New York/Lyon 12th and 18th matchgames 1990).

2) 9...♕d7?! (perhaps somewhat artificial, although it shows that even Vasily Vasilievich did not shun 'violent fantasy') **10 d4** (10 d3 ♗b7 11 ♘bd2 d5 is equal, Bronstein-Smyslov, Leningrad 1960) **10...♖e8 11 a4 ♗b7 12 dxe5** (or 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 14 ♘a3 ♖b8 15 d5 ♘d8 and ...c7-c6) **12...♘xe5 13 axb5 ♘xf3+ 14 ♕xf3 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 16 ♘d2 ♗f8** with equality (Keres-Smyslov, Yugoslavia Candidates 1959). It is stronger to play 12 ♘bd2! aiming to show that Black has determined the position of his queen prematurely.

3) 9...h6!? (the Smyslov Variation) **10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 ♘f1 ♗d7** (or 12...♗b7, Tukmakov-Smyslov, Moscow 1969) **13 ♘g3 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 c5 15 d5 ♘c4** with equal chances (Tal-Smyslov, Baku 1960). 12 ♗c2 ♗b7 13 d5 ♘b8 14 ♘f1 ♘bd7 15 ♘g3 g6 has also occurred.

Later, under the influence of these ideas, Igor Zaitsev's most flexible variation was developed – **9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8.** Incidentally, here too the move ...h7-h6 is an important part of Black's plan in many lines, for example: 12 a4 h6 or 12 a3 h6.

The seventh world champion has also made an enormous contribution to the theory of the closed games. The quantity (and more important – the quality!) of variations worked out by him is impressive. Here I will list just the best-known ones.

Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 dxc4 5 a4 (5 e3 b5 – *Game No.85*; 5 e4 b5 – cf. Volume 3) **5...♗f5** (Smyslov employed this variation more than 50 times – his games against Reshevsky from the 1948 match-tournament and his win over Portisch in Amsterdam 1981 are well-known) or **5...♘a6!?** An original plan: in contrast to the Lasker Variation 5...♗f5 6 e3 ♘a6, Black allows 6 e4. I refer the reader to his games against Gligoric (Yugoslavia Candidates 1959), Stahlberg (by telegraph, 1961) and Bolbochan (Mar del Plata 1966).

Bogo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♗b4+ 4 ♗d2 (after 4 ♘bd2 Smyslov usually played 4...c5) **4...a5!?** (Bronstein's move) **5 g3** (both 5 ♘c3 0-0 6 e3 d6 7 ♕c2 ♘bd7 8 ♗d3 e5, Spraggett-Smyslov, Montpellier Candidates 1985, and 5 ♕c2 d6 6 ♘c3 ♘bd7, Epishin-Smyslov, Biel Interzonal 1993, lead to equality) **5...d5!?**

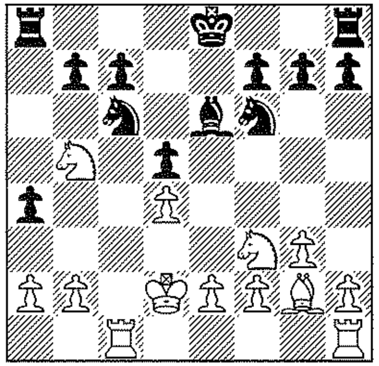
Previously the main line was 5...d6 6 ♗g2 ♘bd7 7 0-0 e5.

6 ♗g2 (White can also consider 6 ♕c2 ♘c6 7 a3!? ♗e7 8 ♗g2 dxc4 9 ♕xc4 ♕d5 10 ♕d3 Ribli-Smyslov, London 2nd matchgame 1983) **6...dxc4 7 ♕c2 ♘c6 8 ♕xc4 ♕d5 9 ♕xd5**

Vasily Vasilievich successfully defended the position after 9 ♕d3!? 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♕h5 against Browne (Tilburg 1982), Hertneck (Dortmund 1986), Akopian (Moscow 1992) and Tukmakov (Rostov 1993).

9...exd5 10 ♘c3 ♗e6! 11 ♖c1 a4! 12 ♘b5?! ♗xd2+ 13 ♔xd2

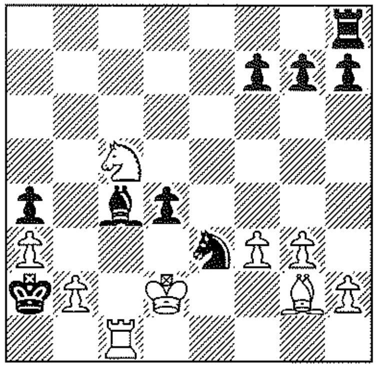
Now the black king becomes highly active.



13...♔d8! 14 ♘e5 ♖a5! 15 ♘xc6+

The point of Black's idea is seen in the variation 15 ♖xc6?! ♖xb5 16 ♖xe6 fxe6 17 ♘f7+ ♔e7 18 ♘xh8 ♖xb2+ 19 ♔d3 ♖xa2 20 ♖b1 b6 21 ♖c1 ♘e8 etc.

15...bxc6 16 ♘c3 ♔e7! 17 ♘d1 ♔d6 18 f3 c5 19 dxc5+ ♖xc5 20 ♖xc5 ♔xc5 21 ♘c3 ♔b4! 22 ♖c1 c5 23 e3 d4 24 exd4 cxd4 25 a3+? (25 ♘e2 ♖d8 26 b3 was more tenacious) **25...♔b3 26 ♘d1 ♗c4** (with the threat of ...♖e8-e2+) **27 ♘f2 ♘d5 28 ♘e4 ♘e3 29 ♘c5+ ♔a2!**



and Black went on to win (Browne-Smyslov, Las Palmas Interzonal 1982).

Schlechter Defence

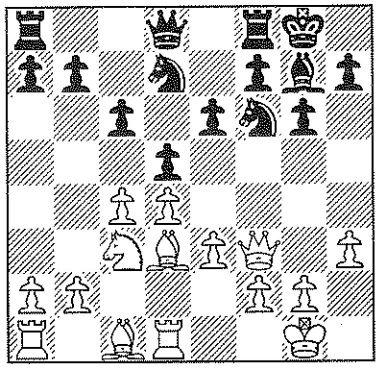
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 g6 5 ♘c3 ♗g7 (Smyslov breathed new life into this old set-up) **6 ♗d3**

After 6 ♗e2!? 0-0 7 0-0 he first tried 7...e6 – against Pachman (Mar del Plata 1962), Furman (Moscow 1969) and Vaganian (Lvov 1978); then 7...♗e6 – against Balashov (Moscow 1981) and Larsen (Bugojno 1984); once 7...b6 – against Torre (Moscow 1981); and then also 7...♗g4 – against Karpov (Moscow 1981), Larsen (Las Palmas Interzonal 1982), Timman (Las Palmas Interzonal 1982), Vyzhmanavin (Gelsenkirchen 1991) and Reshevsky (Moscow 1991).

6...0-0 7 0-0 (or 7 h3!? b6 8 0-0 ♗b7 9 ♕e2 ♘bd7 Chiburdanidze-Smyslov, Marbella 1999) **7...♗g4** (the patent plan of the seventh champion!) **8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 e6**

An interesting alternative is 9...♖e8!? 10 ♖d1 ♕d6 (Ribli-Smyslov, London 8th matchgame 1983), as well as 9...♕d6!? 10 ♖d1 ♘bd7 and ...e7-e5, as Smyslov played against C.Hansen (Rome 1988) and I.Sokolov (Haninge 1989).

10 ♖d1 (10 ♗d2 ♘bd7 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 ♖fc1 a6 13 ♖c2 ♖e8 ½-½ Grivas-Smyslov, Karditsa 1995) **10...♘bd7**



11 e4?!

Premature activity. A variety of ways have been tried here against Vasily Vasilievich – 11 cxd5 exd5 12 b4 (Levenfish, Leningrad 1947), 11 b3 (Bondarevsky, Moscow 1951; Petrosian, Moscow 1955; Ribli, London 6th matchgame 1983), 11 ♗f1 (Panno, Mar del Plata 1962), 11 b4 (Korchnoi, Leningrad 1967), 11 ♗d2 (Chernin, Copenhagen 1986) and 11 ♕e2 (Ioseliani, Roquebrune 1998). But, as a rule, unsuccessfully!

11...e5! (here is the refutation) **12 dxe5**

12 exd5 exd4 is also advantageous to Black, for example: 13 ♘e4 ♘e5 14 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 (Simagin-Smyslov, Moscow 1951) or 13 dxc6 ♘e5 14 ♕e2 ♘xd3 15 ♖xd3 bxc6 (Polugayevsky-Smyslov, Moscow 1960).

12...♘xe5 13 ♕e2 d4 14 ♗c2 ♘fd7! 15 ♘a4 (15 ♖xd4? ♘f3+) **15...♕a5 16 ♗d2** (or 16 f4 d3! 17 ♗xd3 ♕xa4 18 fxe5 ♘xe5) **16...d3!** (a spectacular blow, consolidating Black's advantage) **17 ♗xa5**

If 17 ♕e3 (17 ♕xd3 ♕xa4!) Black was intending 17...♕a6 18 ♗b3 b5 19 cxb5 cxb5 20 ♘c5 (or 20 ♘c3 ♘b6 with the threat of ...♘c4) 20...♘xc5 21 ♕xc5 ♖ac8 22 ♕e3 ♘c4 23 ♗xc4 bxc4 24 ♗c3 ♗xc3 25 bxc3 ♕a3 and White stands badly.

17...dxe2 18 ♖e1 ♘xc4 19 ♗c3 b5 20 ♗b3! ♗xc3 21 ♘xc3 (or 21 bxc3 ♘d2 22 ♘b2 ♘xe4 and wins) **21...♘xb2 22 ♖xe2 ♘d3 23 ♖d1 ♘7c5 24 ♖ed2 ♘b4 25 f4 a5** and Black went on to win (Bisguier-Smyslov, USSR-USA match, Moscow 1955).

Grünfeld Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♗g4 8 ♗e3 ♘fd7! – Smyslov's famous variation (*Games Nos.77, 90, 110 and 113*). But there is also at least one other excellent piece of preparation.

Game 91
S.Gligoric-V.Smyslov
Match USSR-Yugoslavia, Kiev 1959
Grünfeld Defence D87

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♗e3

For many years this was one of the most aggressive variations, and not without reason called the main line: White's strong pawn centre gives him hopes of developing an initiative.

10...♕c7!?

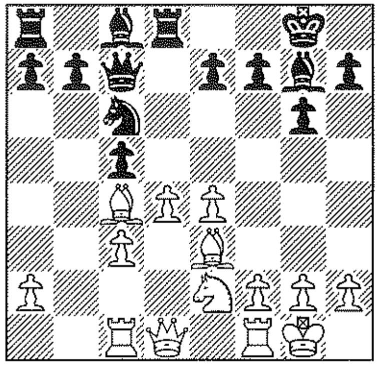
The start of a new, long-term strategic plan. Before this they largely played 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♗g4 12 f3 ♘a5 and if 13 ♗d3 – 13...♗e6 (the battle for the c4-square) 14 ♖c1 ♗xa2 or 14 d5!? ♗xa1 15 ♕xa1 f6 with sharp, calculating play (*Game No.55*).

11 ♖c1

If 11 ♕c1 (Bondarevsky-Levenfish, 11th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1939) the best reply is also 11...♖d8!

11...♖d8

Maintaining the tension. Black's idea is a deep one: to press on the d4-pawn, and then suddenly also on the c4-pawn by ...b7-b6, ...♗b7 and ...f7-f5, endeavouring to force e4-e5, block White's centre and exploit the weak h1-a8 diagonal and d5-square. Note that even Gligoric, one of the strongest grandmasters in the world, proved helpless against this...



12 h3

After 12 f4 Smyslov played 12...e6 (*Game No.99*), although 12...♗g4! is more critical. Now 12 ♗d3?! is ineffective: 12...e6 13 ♗b1 b6 (Bertok-Korchnoi, Vienna 1957), as is 12 ♕e1 or 12 ♕d2 in view of 12...♕a5!

Smyslov's plan took root and was popular for about 30 years. The most famous games are two duels between Spassky and Fischer – at Santa Monica 1966 and at the 1970 Olympiad in Siegen (cf. Volume 3). Both times Black obtained a good position from the opening, but then lost – Spassky played much more inventively than Gligoric, which is not surprising: the latter was the first pioneer...

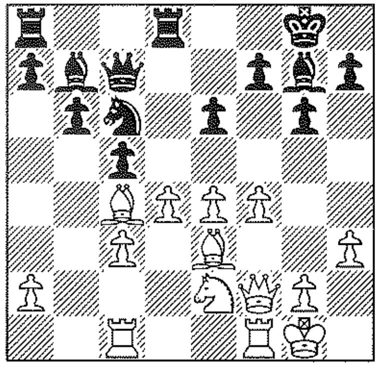
Only in the late 1980s was it revealed that after 12 ♗f4! ♕d7 (12...e5? 13 ♗g5) 13 d5 ♘a5 14 ♗d3 White retains some strategic initiative, and 10...♗g4!? 11 f3 ♘a5 again came to the fore (without the immediate exchange on d4).

12...b6 13 f4 e6 14 ♕e1 ♗b7

According to Fischer, the immediate 14...♘a5 15 ♗d3 f5! is more accurate, after which White should play 16 g4! ♗b7 17 ♘g3 (Spassky-Stein, Moscow 1971). This game will be analysed in Volume 3.

15 ♕f2?!

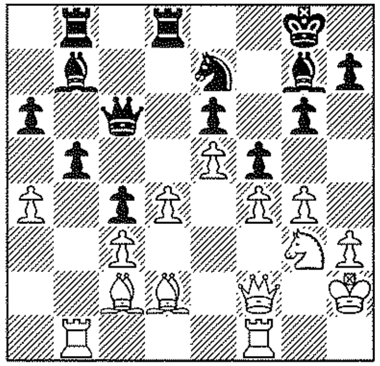
A completely futile move. Gligoric simply does not understand what is going on. Of course, 15 f5 was the best chance, although even here after 15...♘a5 16 ♗d3 (not 16 fxe6? ♘xc4 17 ♖xf7 ♕c8 and wins) 16...exf5 17 exf5 ♖e8 18 ♗g5 (18 ♕f2? c4 19 ♗b1 ♕c7; 18 ♗f4?! ♕e7) 18...♕c6 19 ♖f2 (but not 19 ♕f2?! c4 20 fxg6 fxg6 21 ♗c2 ♕xg2+) 19...cxd4 20 cxd4 ♕d5 Black is fine.



15...♘a5 16 ♗d3 f5! (a thematic undermining move, destroying White's activity) **15...♘a5 16 ♗d3 f5 17 e5** (17 ♘g3 ♕d7!) **17...c4 18 ♗c2 ♘c6**

By fixing the opponent's centre, Black has completely won the opening battle – thanks to his control of the long light-squared diagonal and of the d5-square he has a stable advantage. Although, of course, there is still much play to come.

19 g4!? (not wishing to die of suffocation after 19 ♖cd1 ♘e7 20 ♗c1 ♘d5 21 ♗a3 ♕c6!) **19...♘e7 20 ♔h2 ♕c6 21 ♘g3 b5 22 a4 a6 23 ♖b1 ♖ab8 24 ♗d2**

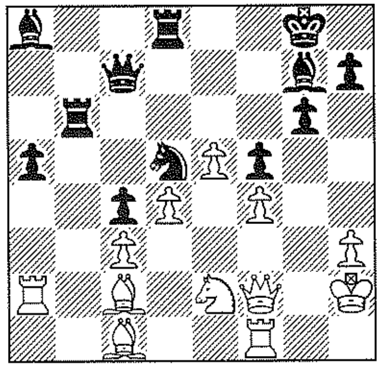


24...bxa4?!

Under the spell of Black's spectacular win, commentators have overestimated his advantage and no one though to ask the question: did this have to be played? All the advantages of his position, without any counterplay for White, would have been retained by the rigorous 24...♗a8! followed by ...♘d5, ...♗f8-e7 and the opening of the position on the queenside at a more appropriate moment. Now, however, all is not so clear, as we shall see.

25 ♖a1 ♗a8 26 ♗xa4 ♕c7 27 ♖a2 ♖b6 28 gxf5 exf5 29 ♗c1 ♘d5 30 ♘e2 a5 31 ♗c2?!

As the computer asserts, much greater defensive resources would have been retained by 31 ♗a3! ♖b3 (31...♗f8 32 ♗c5) 32 ♖c1! with a complicated game.



31...♖b3!

'White appeared to have set up a solid defence, but this well-prepared exchange sacrifice adds sharpness to Black's attack.' (Smyslov) It is indeed a very pretty sacrifice, but this is not yet the end.

32 ♗xb3

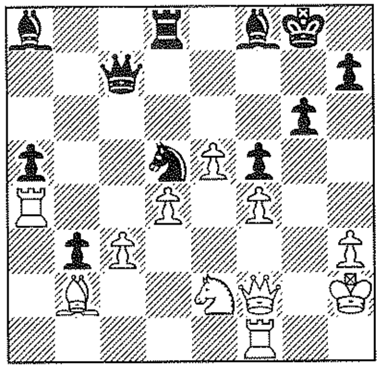
From a practical point of view either of the continuations 32 ♕g3!? or 32 ♗d2 ♖db8 33 ♖fa1 ♖b2 34 ♗c1 ♖xa2 35 ♖xa2 was perhaps more advisable, although Smyslov does not comment on this.

32...cxb3 33 ♖a4 ♗f8

'33...♘xc3 34 ♘xc3 ♕xc3 35 ♗b2 (*35 ♗d2!? – G.K.*) 35...♕d3 36 ♖xa5 ♗f8 also came into consideration.' (Smyslov) But in my opinion, Black has no more than the initiative for the exchange after 37 ♖aa1.

34 ♗b2

'If 34 c4 there are some strong attacking possibilities: 34...♘b6 35 ♖xa5 ♘xc4 or 34...♘b4.' (Smyslov) But in the first case after 36 ♖b5! ♖b8 37 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 38 ♘c3 b2 (38...♕b4 39 ♗b2) 39 ♗xb2 ♕xb2 40 ♕xb2 ♘xb2 41 d5 it is now White who is playing for a win! Whereas after 34...♘b4! 35 ♗d2 ♕xc4 36 ♖xa5 b2 Black does indeed have a powerful attack.



34...♘e3! 35 ♖fa1

If 35 ♕xe3 the double attack 35...♕c6 is decisive, for example: 36 d5 ♖xd5! (but not 36...♕xa4 37 d6) 37 ♖aa1 ♗c5 38 ♕f3 (38 ♘d4 ♖xd4) 38...♖d2 39 ♕xc6 ♖xe2+ 40 ♔g3 ♗xc6.

35...♘c4 36 ♘g3

'If 36 ♖xc4 ♕xc4 37 ♖xa5, then 37...♗e7 with the dangerous threat of ...♗h4!' (Smyslov) But this nevertheless came into consideration, since after 38 ♖a7 ♗h4 39 ♘g3 ♕d3 there is the very pretty 40 ♘h5!!, forcing 40...♗d5! (40...♗xf2?? 41 ♘f6+ ♔f8 42 ♗a3+ and mate) 41 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 42 exf6 with unclear play. Another interesting idea is 36 ♘c1!? ♗d5 37 ♘d3 ♗e7 etc.

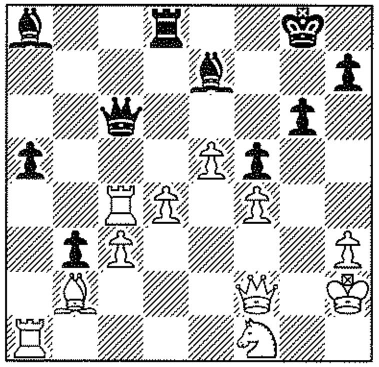
White's position may not yet be completely lost, but in a practical game, and also in time-trouble, it is very hard for him to defend: it is not clear which is a ruinous path, and which a saving one. After all, it is a human who is defending and not a computer! It is not surprising that in the end Gligoric overlooked a mate...

36...♗e7 37 ♘f1

'Inadequate was 37 ♘xf5? gxf5 38 ♕g3+ ♔f8! 39 ♖g1 ♗d5 when the black king is securely defended. However, better was 37 ♕e2! ♗d5 38 ♘f1 ♖a8 39 ♘e3 ♘xe3 40 ♕xe3 ♗c6 41 c4 ♗xa4 42 ♖xa4 ♕c6 43 ♕xb3 ♕e4! with double-edged play.' (Smyslov) Hiarcs instantly demonstrates how much this play is worth: 44 ♕g3 ♖b8 45 ♕f2 ♗h4! 46 ♕d2 ♗e1 or 44 c5+ ♔g7 45 ♗a1 ♗h4! 46 ♖a2 a4! 47 ♕c3 ♖b8!, winning.

37...♕c6 38 ♖xc4?

A fatal oversight in time-trouble. White was aiming for this counter exchange sacrifice, but he carried it out at the most unfortunate moment. It was still possible to play 38 ♘g3 and to try and think up something after 38...♗h4! (only not 39 ♘xf5? ♗xf2 40 ♘e7+ ♔f8 41 ♘xc6 ♘xb2 42 ♘xd8 ♘xa4 43 ♖xa4 b2 and wins).



38...♕h1+!

This forces an elegant mating finish; Gligoric had only reckoned on 38...♕xc4?! 39 ♘e3 ♕c7 40 c4.

39 ♔g3 h5! 0-1

In view of 40...h4 mate (or 40 ♕e2 ♕g1+). A game not without its mistakes, but with deep ideas and a spectacular finish. Smyslov's new plan with 10...♕c7 and 11...♖d8 was brilliantly successful!

I anticipate the question: what about Smyslov's ideas for White? To be honest, they did not have such an influence on the development of opening theory. Vasily Vasilievich usually simply contented himself with a comfortable and free game.

Nevertheless, a number of his favourite 'White' schemes are fairly important – **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3** (the Catalan Opening) and **1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3** (the Closed Variation of the Sicilian Defence). Both of these openings guarantee prolonged strategic play in the middlegame without mass exchanges. Smyslov did not in fact aim for more: as it was, he was too strong for his rivals in his best years.

Heavyweight Battles

My account of how Smyslov won two successive Candidates tournaments (1953 and 1956) starts with two of his 'Black' games with Efim Geller, one of the strongest grandmasters in the world in the 1950s-1970s.

For Smyslov (and for many others as well!) a meeting at the board with Geller was always a severe test. His well-honed opening repertoire and sharp combinative vision made Efim Petrovich very dangerous for any opponent – especially when he was playing with the white pieces.

Game 92
E.Geller-V.Smyslov
Candidates Tournament,
Zürich 1953, 7th round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E29

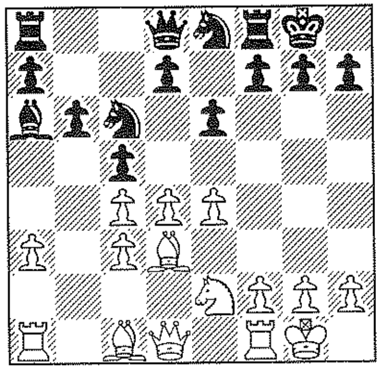
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 bxc3

The Sämisch Variation is the most direct attempt to cast doubts on the Nimzo-Indian Defence. By provoking the exchange on c3, White strengthens his centre and plans an attack on the kingside, exploiting the strength of his two bishops. The drawback to this plan is the chronic weakness of the doubled c-pawns, which is especially perceptible in a protracted positional struggle.

7...♘c6 8 ♘e2 b6 9 0-0 ♗a6 10 e4 ♘e8!

Both sides are aiming to exploit their trumps: White is laying the basis for an attack, whereas Black is focusing his attention on the c4-pawn. The knight retreat, which was introduced by Capablanca in 1929, enables the unpleasant pin ♗g5 to be avoided and is an important part of Black's plan: he is ready to meet the dangerous advance f2-f4 with ...f7-f5, keeping the position closed and restricting the activity of the white bishops.

On one occasion the great Botvinnik fell victim of this subtle plan: 9 e4 ♘e8! 10 ♗e3 d6 (10...♗a6! is more accurate) 11 0-0 (11 ♘g3! – Geller) 11...♘a5 12 ♘g3 ♗a6 13 ♕e2 ♕d7 14 f4 (14 a4!?) 14...f5! 15 ♖ae1 (15 d5 g6!) 15...g6 with an excellent game for Black (Botvinnik-Reshevsky, The Hague/Moscow 1948).



11 ♕a4

'The queen is misplaced here; it should support the threats on the kingside. More consistent is 11 f4 f5 12 ♘g3 with the threats of d4-d5 and e4-e5. In any case White's play should develop in that direction, and not on the other wing, where the queen is very passive.' (Bronstein)

But 40 years later Karpov struck a fearful blow at White's entire set-up, effectively putting an end to the history of the variation: 12...g6 13 ♗e3 cxd4! (13...♘d6 14 exf5 ♘xc4, as in Yusupov-Karpov, London 3rd matchgame 1989, is less convincing) 14 cxd4 d5! 15 cxd5 ♗xd3 16 ♕xd3 fxe4 17 ♕xe4 ♕xd5 18 ♕xd5 exd5 19 ♖ac1 ♖c8 20 f5 ♘d6 21 fxg6 hxg6 22 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 and ...♘c4 with a superior endgame (Yusupov-Karpov, Linares 1993).

11...♕c8!

Black spent about an hour on this move. If 12 dxc5 he was intending 12...♘e5 13 ♖d1 bxc5.

12 ♗e3 d6

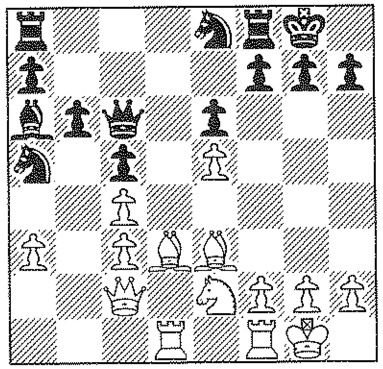
It is also possible to play 12...♘a5!? 13 dxc5 d6! 14 cxb6 axb6 15 ♕c2 ♘xc4 16 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 with a comfortable game (Geller-Simagin, Gorky 1954).

13 ♖ad1 (13 ♘g3 is more energetic, and if 13...♘a5 14 d5!) **13...♘a5 14 dxc5?**

A positional blunder, after which the c4-pawn cannot be defended. By 14 d5 White could have avoided the worst, although after 14...♘f6 15 ♗g5 ♘g4! 16 ♗e7 ♕e8! 17 ♕xe8 ♖fxe8 18 ♗xd6 ♗xc4 Black has no reason to complain.

14...dxc5 15 e5 ♕c6 16 ♕c2

16 ♕xc6?! ♘xc6 and again ...♘a5! was clearly unfavourable for White.



16...f5! (a typical procedure: Black kills all his opponent's chances on the kingside and then begins gathering the harvest on the queenside)

17 ♕a2

'White is condemned to passive defence. If 17 exf6, then 17...♘xf6 18 ♗g5 ♗xc4 19 ♗xf6 ♗xd3 20 ♖xd3 ♖xf6 21 c4 ♖af8 22 f3 ♕c4! 23 ♖c1 ♕h4 and Black maintains a material advantage.' (Smyslov)

17...♕a4 18 ♘f4 ♘c7 19 ♗c2 ♕e8!?

This is more subtle and cunning than the crude 19...♗xc4 20 ♗xa4 ♗xa2 or 19...♕xc4 20 ♕a1 ♕b5 21 ♖fe1 ♕e8. There is no reason to hurry!

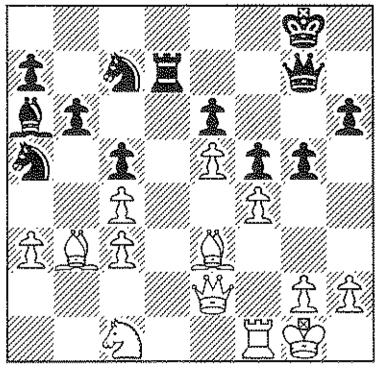
20 ♗b3

'In order to hold his pawn, White is forced to make this ugly move. His subsequent manoeuvres are highly resourceful, but the fundamental weakness of his pawn structure is irreparable and Black's initiative grows steadily.' (Smyslov)

20...g5 21 ♘h3 h6 22 f3

Or 22 f4 g4 23 ♘f2 ♕e7 24 ♖d6 ♖fd8 25 ♖fd1 ♘e8, exchanging rooks on the d-file. The strategic battle has concluded in the complete domination of the black pieces and, despite his opponent's heroic resistance, Smyslov now takes the game to its logical conclusion.

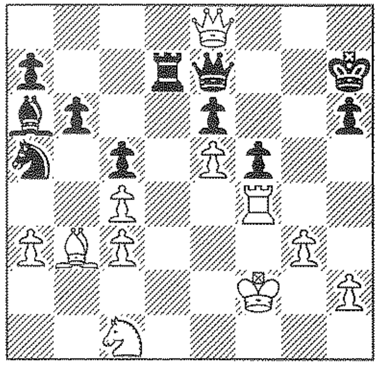
22...♕e7 23 ♘f2 ♖ad8 24 ♘d3 ♕g7! 25 f4 ♖d7 26 ♘c1 ♖fd8 27 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 28 ♕e2



28...♘d5! 29 ♗d2 ♘xf4 30 ♗xf4 gxf4 31 ♖xf4 ♕g5 32 g3 ♔h7 33 ♔f2 ♕d8 34 ♕h5 ♖g7 35 ♕e2 ♖d7 36 ♕h5 ♕g5 37 ♕e8

Or 37 ♕e2 ♖d8 38 ♕e3 ♘c6 39 ♘d3 ♘e7 with the threat of 40...♘g6.

37...♕e7



38 ♕xe7+

'White is forced to exchange queens and go into a difficult endgame. If 38 ♕h5 there would have followed 38...♕g7 39 ♕e8 (or 39 ♖h4 ♖d2+ 40 ♔e1 ♖d8 41 ♔f2 ♘c6) 39...♖e7 40 ♕d8 ♘c6 41 ♕d6 ♘xe5 with an extra pawn and an attack.' (Smyslov)

38...♖xe7 39 ♗a2 ♖d7 (threatening 40...♖d1) **40 ♔e2 ♗b7** (with the idea of ...♗e4 and ...♘c6) **41 ♗b1 ♔g8 42 g4 fxg4 43 ♖xg4+ ♖g7 44 ♖h4 ♖g1 45 ♔d2 ♔g7 46 ♗d3 ♗f3 47 ♖f4 ♗h5 48 ♘e2 ♖g2 49 ♔e3**

Or 49 h4 ♘c6 50 ♖e4 ♗g6 51 ♖e3 ♖g4 and wins.

49...♖g5! 50 h4 (if 50 ♖e4, then 50...♘c6 51 ♘f4 ♗f7) **50...♖xe5+ 51 ♔d2 ♘b3+ 52 ♔d1 ♖e3 53 ♔c2 e5 54 ♖f2 e4 0-1**

In view of 55 ♘f4 exd3+ 56 ♔xb3 ♗e2 with the threat of 57...d2!

But even such a catastrophe, together with his defeat against Euwe (*Game No.28*), did not shake Geller's belief in this sharp variation, and in the three years after Zürich he more than once demonstrated boundless flights of fantasy, defeating some quite strong opponents in the Sämisch Variation. On the way, incidentally, he gained his 'revenge' against Smyslov, defeating him in 1955 in a play-off match for the title of USSR Champion (cf. *Game No.95*).

The tournament rivalry between them

reached its height! It need hardly be said how significant their next duel in the 1956 Candidates tournament was, and what tense intrigue was concealed behind the outwardly calm movements of the pieces...

Game 93

E.Geller-V.Smyslov

Candidates Tournament,
Amsterdam 1956, 2nd round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E26

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 a3 ♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 c5 6 e3 b6 7 ♘e2 (7 ♗d3 – *Game No.28*) **7...♘c6 8 ♘g3 0-0 9 ♗d3 ♗a6 10 e4!?**

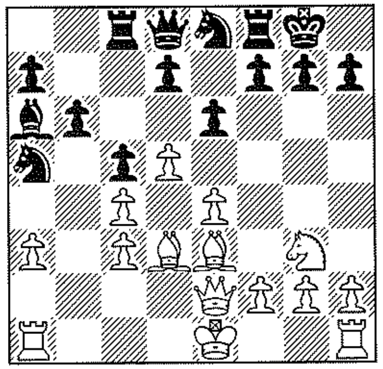
On this occasion, after a slight change in move order, Geller offers a sharp pawn sacrifice.

10...♘e8!

Black sticks to his successful plan. It is dangerous for Black to play the capture 10...cxd4?! as after 11 cxd4 ♘xd4 12 e5 ♘e8 13 ♗b2 ♘c6 14 ♕h5 White emerges with quite good attacking prospects.

11 ♗e3 ♘a5 12 ♕e2 ♖c8 13 d5

'A committal decision. White's centre becomes less mobile and may soon come under attack. 13 ♖c1 came into consideration.' (Smyslov)



At first sight White seems to have gone mad: after the obvious 13...♘d6 the c4-pawn can no longer be defended. However, after 14 e5 ♘dxc4 15 ♕h5 g6 16 ♕h6, with the threat of ♘h5, Geller would have gained an excellent opportunity to demonstrate his tactical skill. True, the black king is not bound to drown in the sea of complications: 16...f5! (but not 16...♘xe3?? 17 ♘h5! ♘xg2+ 18 ♔d1 and mate) 17 ♗g5 ♕e8 18 ♗f6 ♖xf6!? (a less adventurous alternative is 18...♖f7 19 0-0 exd5 20 ♘xf5! gxf5 21 ♕g5+ ♔f8 22 ♕h6+ with a draw, or 19...♗b7 20 dxe6 dxe6 21 h4 with sufficient compensation) 19 exf6 exd5+ 20 ♗e4! ♔f7! 21 ♕g7+ ♔e6 22 ♗d3 ♕f7 23 ♕h6 ♔d6 24 0-0 ♖f8 25 ♕f4+ ♔c6 etc.

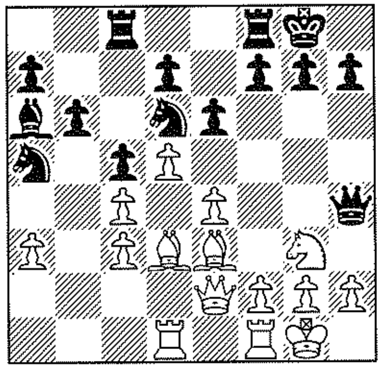
Nevertheless, Vasily Vasilievich sensibly declines to play on his opponent's 'home ground'.

13...♕h4!

While his subordinates are engaged with the c4-pawn, the task of defending His Majesty is taken on by the queen herself.

14 0-0 ♘d6 15 ♖ad1!

Applause for boldness! Geller had long ago written off the c4-pawn, concentrating his efforts on creating a compensating attack on the kingside.



15...f5!

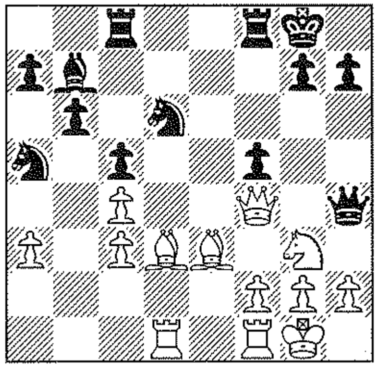
Taking the bull by the horns! Although 15...♗xc4 (15...♘dxc4?! 16 ♗c1 is inferior) seemed safe enough, White would have obtained precisely that which he wanted: 16 e5 ♗xd3 17 ♖xd3 ♘dc4 18 ♗c1 with fairly real threats – 18...♘b3?! is dangerous in view of 19 dxe6 dxe6 20 ♘h5 ♘xc1 21 ♖xc1 and then ♖h3 (g3).

'Of course, the attacked pawn could have been captured, but Black prefers to restrict the mobility of the enemy bishops.' (Smyslov) I would add: to reduce White's attacking potential and prepare the ground for mass exchanges. This avoidance (already the third!) of complications came as a cold shower for White. The cruel reality is that his broken queenside pawns will transform any endgame into a nightmare...

16 dxe6 dxe6 (risky is 16...f4 17 exd7 ♖cd8 18 e5) **17 exf5 exf5 18 ♕f3**

With the threat of 19 ♕d5+.

18...♗b7 19 ♕f4



19...♕f6

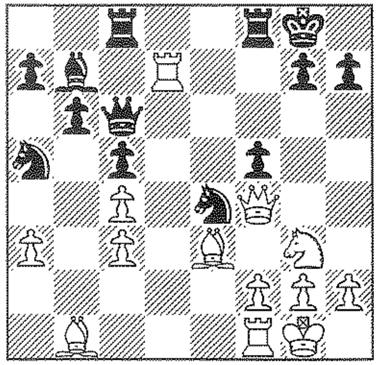
For the moment the exchange of queens is premature. After 19...♕xf4?! 20 ♗xf4 ♘e4 21 f3 ♘xg3 22 hxg3 ♗a6 23 ♖fe1 the white rooks are ready to invade the seventh rank, for example: 23...♖f7 (23...♖cd8? 24 ♗xf5! ♖xd1 25 ♗e6+) 24 ♖e5 ♖d8 25 ♖d5.

20 ♗b1! ♘e4! 21 ♖d7

'Striving to complicate the situation. After 21 ♘xe4 fxe4 22 ♕xf6 (*also inadequate is 22 ♕g4 ♖ce8! – G.K.*) 22...♖xf6 23 ♖d7 ♖f7 24 ♖fd1 ♗c6 the endgame favours Black.' (Smyslov)

21...♕c6

Setting up a menacing battery on the h1-a8 diagonal. Although the position is still full of tension, White's attacking potential is petering out.



22 ♖xb7!

Having seen that 22 ♖e7 ♘xc3 23 f3 ♕f6! 24 ♕xf5! (24 ♖d7 ♕e6, and 25 ♗xf5? is not possible in view of 25...♘e2+ 26 ♘xe2 ♖xf5) 24...♘xb1 25 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 26 ♖xb1 ♖f7 27 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 28 ♖c1 ♖d8 leads to a depressing ending, White decides on extreme measures.

22...♕xb7 23 ♘xf5?!

'In striving to avoid an unpleasant endgame, Geller goes too far. If 23 ♘xe4 Black has the favourable 23...fxe4 24 ♗xe4 ♖xf4 (*24...♕e7 25 ♗d5+ maintains the balance – G.K.*) 25 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 26 ♗xf4 ♖d8 27 ♖c1 ♘a5.' (Smyslov) But after 28 ♔f1 ♘xc4 29 a4 White still has sufficient defensive resources.

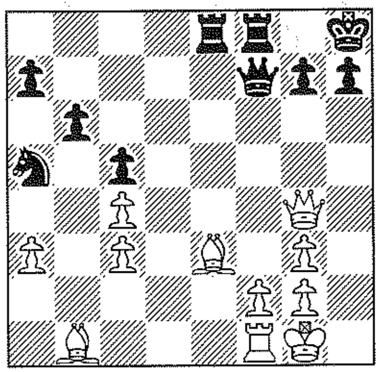
23...♖ce8! (here greed is inappropriate: 23...♘xc3? is met forcefully by 24 ♕h4! with the threat of ♘e7+ or ♘d6) **24 ♕g4 ♔h8 25 ♘g3 ♘xg3**

Now 25...♘xc3?! 26 ♗d3 ♖d8 27 ♗f5 would have allowed the opponent to confuse matters.

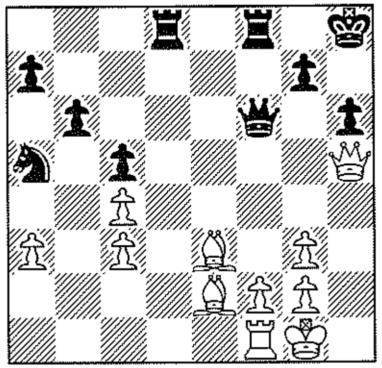
26 hxg3 ♕f7

'Combining defence of the king with an attack on the pawn weaknesses. For the exchange White has a pawn plus the two bishops, which makes it hard for Black to convert his advantage.' (Smyslov)

Indeed, two bishops and a pawn are often sufficient compensation for a rook and knight, but here the decisive role is played by defects in the pawn structure. Although, of course, Black's task is not easy: in some cases the bishops together with the queen are able to spring an unpleasant surprise.



27 ♕h4 h6 28 ♗d3 ♕f6 29 ♕h5 ♖d8! (dislodging the bishop from the dangerous diagonal) **30 ♗e2 ♕f5 31 ♕h4 ♕f6 32 ♕h5**



32...♘c6?!

'The knight heads for the opposite wing, to take a more active part in the game.' (Smyslov) However, in my view and also the 'view' of the computer, this is an excessively precautionary measure. 32...♕xc3 is more precise, since after 33 ♗xh6 gxh6 34 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 35 ♗g4 ♕g7 36 ♗e6+ ♖f7 the depleted white army is unable to do any damage.

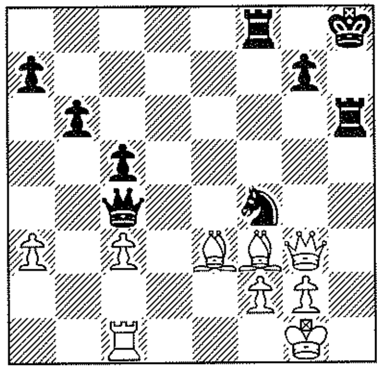
However, Smyslov's decision is easy to explain: with time-trouble approaching, he did not want the enemy pieces to be crowding around his king.

33 g4 ♕f7 34 ♕h4 ♘e7 35 ♕h3 ♘g6 36 ♕h2?

The concluding time-trouble error. '36 g3 was somewhat better, although even then after 36...♔g8 (*or 36...♘e5 37 g5 ♘xc4 38 ♗f4! with counter-chances* – G.K.) 37 g5 hxg5 38 ♗xg5 ♖de8 39 ♗d3 ♖e1! 40 f4 ♖fe8 41 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 42 ♔f2 ♖e8 and ...♘f8 Black retains the advantage.' (Smyslov) But here the win is still a long way off and White somehow stays afloat.

36...♘f4 37 ♗f3 (37 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 38 ♕xf4 ♖xf4 is also hopeless) **37...♕xc4 38 g5 ♖d6 39 ♖c1 ♖g6 40 gxh6 ♖xh6 41 ♕g3**

Here the game was adjourned and Smyslov sealed his move.



41...♕e4! (the most resolute continuation!) **42 ♕xf4**

The queen is taboo: 42 ♗xe4 ♘e2+ 43 ♔f1 ♘xg3+ 44 ♔e1 ♖h1+ 45 ♔d2 ♘xe4+. On the other hand, ...♕h7 is threatened, and White is therefore forced to go into the endgame.

42...♕xf4 43 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 44 ♖e1 ♖a4

44...♖hf6 was also good. It is time for White to resign, but Geller's desperate resistance imparts an additional resonance to the game.

45 ♖e8+ ♔h7 46 ♗e4+ g6 47 g4 ♖xa3 48 ♖e6 ♖xc3

The entire queenside – the cause of White's constant headache – has disappeared from the board.

49 ♔g2

The white king is unable to help its small army. If immediately 49 g5, then 49...♖h4 50 ♗xg6+ ♔g7 51 ♗f5 ♖f4.

49...b5 50 f3 b4 51 g5 ♖h4 52 ♗xg6+ ♔g7 53 ♔g3 ♖d4 54 ♗e8

'Or 54 ♗h5 ♖d7, not allowing perpetual check. If 54 ♗f5, then 54...♖d5 55 ♔g4 ♖xf5 56 ♔xf5 ♖xf3+ 57 ♔e4 ♖f7 58 ♔d5 b3 59 ♔xc5 b2 60 ♖e1 ♖c7+ and 61...♖c1.' (Smyslov) I would add: 59 ♖e2 ♖b7 60 ♖b2 a5 61 ♔xc5 ♖b4! and the connected passed pawns cannot be stopped.

54...b3 55 g6 ♖d8 0-1

Without managing to complete the move 56 ♖e7+, White lost on time, but his defeat was inevitable: 56...♔f6 57 g7 ♖xe8!

In the second half of this Candidates tournament Smyslov also defeated Geller with White, and moreover again, as in 1953, in his opponent's favourite defence – the King's Indian (true, in both cases it was not a question of the opening, but of Geller's excessively sharp play). To twice achieve a 2-0 score against one of your most dangerous rivals – it is of such bricks that the building of overall victory is made...

Petrovich – Threat to the Champions

Now is the time to break off and remember Efim Petrovich Geller (1925-1998), another chess legend, known for his academic opening erudition and bold attacking style of play. He played six times(!) in the Candidates events, but, alas, he did not in fact get through to a main match for the crown. However, he had a positive or equal score against nearly all the world champions!

His very first appearance in a USSR Championship (Moscow 1949) caused a genuine sensation: a round before the finish the young master from Odessa was in first place, half a point ahead of Smyslov and Bronstein. And only a lack of practicality prevented him from becoming champion of the country at the very first attempt. 'In the history of Soviet chess events such flights are very rare,' wrote grandmaster Levenfish. 'Geller played a number of splendid games, demonstrated outstanding tactical talent, subtle understanding of position, good endgame technique and unprecedented energy and impetuosity. Geller undoubtedly has a brilliant future.'

He soon qualified for the Interzonal tournament, by playing splendidly in the 19th USSR Championship (Moscow 1951): 1. Keres – 12 out of 17; 2-3. Geller and Petrosian – 11½; 4. Smyslov – 11; 5. Botvinnik – 10; 6-8. Averbakh, Bronstein and Taimanov – 9½ etc. And in the spring of 1952 he distinguished himself in the Maróczy Memorial, a strong international tournament in Budapest: 1. Keres – 12½ out of 17; 2. Geller – 12; 3-5. Botvinnik, Smyslov and Stahlberg – 11; 6. Szabo – 10½; 7-8. Petrosian and Pilnik – 9½ etc.

In his first encounter with the current world champion in the USSR Championship, Geller defeated Botvinnik in a very complicated struggle, moreover with Black. It will come as no surprise that before their second meeting in Budapest, Botvinnik was in a very determined mood...

Game 94

M.Botvinnik-E.Geller

Maróczy Memorial Tournament,
Budapest 1952, 2nd round
King's Indian Defence E69

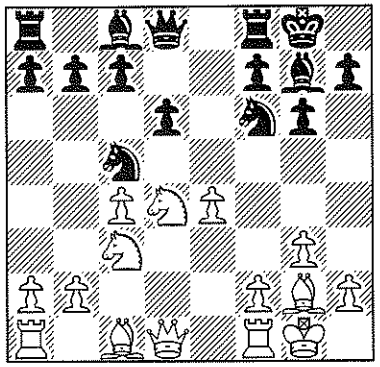
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 (8 b3?! – *Games Nos.51 and 52*) **8...exd4**

'This old variation had been enriched by that time, primarily by the efforts of Boleslavsky and Bronstein,' writes Geller, who was himself one of the pillars of the King's Indian Defence.

Later he turned to 8...c6, for example: 9 h3 (10 ♗e3 – *Game No.107*) 9...♕b6 10 ♖e1 (10 d5 – *Game No.128*) 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♖e8 12 ♖e2 ♘g4! 13 ♘c2 ♘ge5 14 ♘e3 ♘c5 15 b3?

(15 ♖d2 ♗e6!?) 15...♗xh3! and wins (Botvinnik-Geller, Belgrade 1969), or 13 ♖d2 ♘ge5 14 b3 ♘c5 15 ♖c2!? (Bagirov-Geller, Lvov Zonal 1978).

9 ♘xd4 ♘c5



10 h3

The game Kotov-Geller (17th USSR Championship, Moscow 1949) went 10 f3 ♘fd7 (according to Geller, 10...a5! 11 ♗e3 a4! was more accurate) 11 ♗e3 c6 12 ♕d2 a5 13 ♖ad1 ♘e5 14 b3 a4 15 ♘de2? (Botvinnik recommended 15 f4!, but here too Geller suggested 15...axb3!? 16 fxe5 bxa2) 15...axb3! 16 ♗xc5 ♘xc4 with excellent compensation for the piece. The jury, headed by Botvinnik, judged this game to be the most brilliant in the tournament.

10...♖e8 11 ♖e1 a5

'An unusual battle of nerves has begun. White is waiting for ...c7-c6 (without which Black cannot get by), so as to develop his bishop at f4 with gain of tempo. For his part, Black puts off this move until the last possible moment and carries out the flank diversion that is usual in this position.' (Geller)

12 ♕c2 (I prefer 12 ♖b1!?) **12...a4!** (as has already been mentioned, if 12...c6, then 13 ♗f4!? ♘fd7 14 ♘b3! is strong) **13 ♗e3**

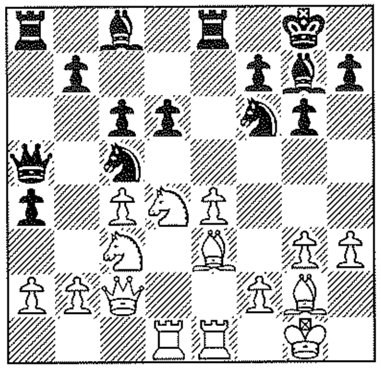
'White does not hold out and is the first to waver. 13 ♖b1 was still possible.' (Geller)

13...c6 14 ♖ad1

14 ♖ab1! was more cunning, and only if 14...♕e7 (14...♕a5 15 b4; 14...♗d7 15 ♖bd1; 14...♕b6!?) – 15 ♖bd1! ♘fd7 (15...♗d7 16 ♗f4!) 16 ♖e2 (Petrosian-Ciocaltea, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978) or 16 b4 (Padevsky-Kasparov, Baku 1980). While if 14...♘fd7, then 15 b4 axb3 16 axb3 ♕e7 (Gavrikov-Kasparov, Horgen 1994) 17 f4! ♘f6 18 ♗f2, retaining a slight plus.

14...♕a5

A year later Boleslavsky and Bronstein introduced 14...♘fd7 (*Game No.57*).



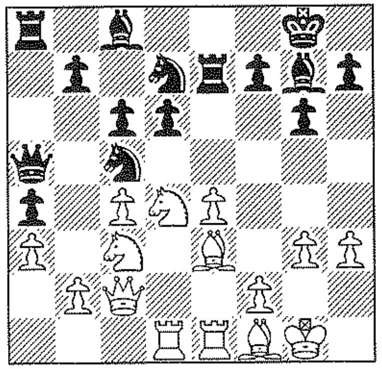
15 a3?!

'A self-blocking move, after which the knight at c5 feels very much at home.' (Geller) If this had been played by an amateur, everyone would merely have smiled understandingly. But when this is played by Botvinnik, we must try to understand – why? He sets up a defensive construction on the queenside – he deprives the black knight of the b4-square and removes the threat of ...a4-a3 forever, so that this pawn should not terrorise White in the endgame. At the same time he hopes that the weakness at c4 will be insignificant and that White will be able to create play in the centre.

Even so, 15 ♗f4! was clearly better, as had previously been played by Donner and Petrosian, but after 15...♗f8 they restricted themselves to the modest 16 ♗f1, whereas the later game Reshevsky-Najdorf (USA 14th match-game 1952) went 16 ♘f3 (Portisch's plan 16 ♖b1!? ♘e6 17 ♗e3 ♗g7 18 ♘de2! is also good) 16...♗e6 (16...♖d8!?) 17 ♗xd6 ♗xc4 18 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 19 e5 ♘d5 20 ♖d4 b5 21 ♕d2 and White gained the advantage. Geller recommended 15...♘e6 16 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 17 ♗xd6 ♗xc4 18 e5 ♘d7 'with chances for both sides', although in my opinion, after 19 f4 Black does not have equality in this position either.

In addition, White can try 15 f4 ♗d7 16 ♗f2 ♖e7 17 e5!? (but not 17 g4 ♖ae8! R.Byrne-Kotov, New York 1954) 17...dxe5 18 fxe5 ♘e8 19 ♘f3 ♗f5 20 ♕e2 a3 21 g4 ♗e6 22 b3 with some initiative: White's pieces are better placed, and Black's worse, compared with the classic duel Reshevsky-Bronstein (*Game No.57*).

15...♘fd7 16 ♗f1 ♖e7



'Inviting White to declare his intentions, since he has made all the useful moves with his pieces and must now begin "his own play". But it will inevitably give Black good counter-chances: his position is full of dynamism and White already has some weaknesses (at b3, in particular).' (Geller)

17 f4?! (signalling the start of an offensive) **17...♘f6! 18 ♗f2 ♗d7** (with the threat of ...♖ae8!) **19 e5**

White is forced to break through in the centre, but in a less favourable situation than Reshevsky in the aforementioned game with Bronstein.

19...dxe5 20 fxe5 ♘e8 21 ♘f3 ♗f5 22 ♕e2 h5!

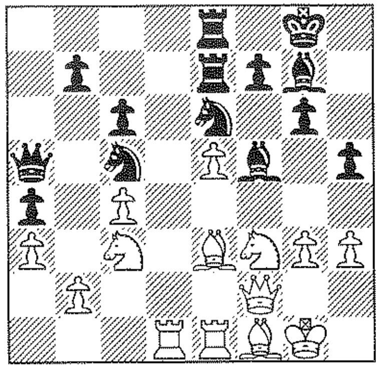
Supporting the position of the bishop at f5. Now, in contrast to the variation from the note to White's 15th move (15 f4 ♗d7 16 ♗f2 ♖e7 17 e5!? etc.), White does not have the possibility of pushing back the opponent's forces.

23 ♗d4 ♘c7 24 ♕f2

Botvinnik has found a clever regrouping, putting the knight at c5 under fire. 24 ♘h4 ♗d7 is pointless, since the knight has to return to f3 to defend the e5-pawn.

24...♘7e6 25 ♗e3 ♖ae8

Geller also considered 25...♖d8, but the move in the game is more energetic.



26 ♘h4?

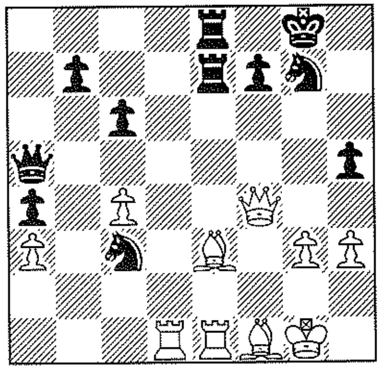
A serious mistake, leading to defeat. Although Black has achieved a great deal and all his pieces are ideally placed, after 26 ♖d6! (this has not been suggested by anyone) he would have had to avoid a cunning trap: 26...♘d7? 27 ♖ed1 ♘xe5 28 ♘h4!, and suddenly White has a powerful attack: 28...♗xh3 29 ♗xh3 ♘xc4 30 ♖d7 ♘xe3 31 ♗xe6. The correct move is 26...♖d7! 27 ♖ed1 ♖ed8, retaining the initiative and chances of exploiting the weaknesses in the opponent's position. But this would have been nothing like what occurred in the game!

Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that the plan with 15 a3?! has not succeeded. This position proved excessively complicated even for Botvinnik, who was famed for his strategic thinking. He had not yet encountered such problems. Whereas in the game with Capablanca (*Game No.37*) the plan was clear to him (f2-f3, e3-e4 etc.), here the evaluation was influenced by numerous factors of different degrees of importance, non-obvious connections of positional elements, which it was not easy to accurately consider and weigh up. The main conclusion for future generations was that White has insufficient compensation for the voluntary weakening of the queenside and the appearance of the 'eternal' knight on c5 – the static weakness at d6 proved less significant than Black's dynamic trumps.

26...♗xe5! (of course, not 26...♘c4? 27 ♘xc4 ♗xe4 28 ♗d2! ♕xe5 29 ♗c3) **27 ♘xf5 gxf5 28 ♕xf5 ♘g7! 29 ♕f2 ♗xc3!**

A concrete evaluation of the position! The king is defended by the knight at g7, so Black can afford to exchange his second bishop as well: he dominates the position and in addition White has a mass of pawn weaknesses.

30 bxc3 ♘e4 31 ♕f4 ♘xc3

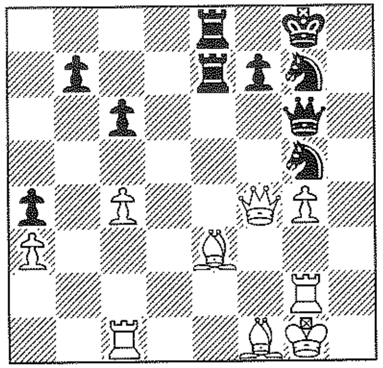


32 ♖c1 ♘a2 (a couple of extra moves to gain time on the clock) **33 ♖cd1 ♘c3 34 ♖c1 ♘e4! 35 ♖e2**

White would also have been unlikely to save the game by 35 c5 ♘xc5 36 ♗d2 ♕d8 37 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 38 ♗b4 ♘ce6! etc.

35...♕f5 36 g4 (or 36 ♕xf5 ♘xf5 and wins) **36...hxg4 37 hxg4 ♕g6!**

'The most accurate. Now White cannot get away with only exchanging the queens.' (Geller) **38 ♖g2** (38 c5 ♘h5 39 ♕f3 ♘eg3 40 ♖ee1 ♘xf1 41 ♔xf1 ♘f6 wins for Black) **38...♘g5!**



39 ♕xg5?!

'There is nothing else.' (Geller) But in my view, the only chance was 39 ♖g3!? with some saving hopes, which would have faded after the unexpected 39...♘f3+! (39...♖e4 40 ♕f2) 40 ♖xf3 ♖e4 41 ♕h6 ♖xe3 42 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 43 ♖xe3 ♕xg4+ 44 ♔h1 ♘f5 45 ♗h3 ♕f4 46 ♖e8+ ♔g7 47 ♖g1+ ♔f6 etc. Now, however, the game concludes very quickly.

39...♖xe3 40 ♕xg6 fxg6 41 c5 ♘e6 (but not 41...♖xa3? 42 ♗c4+ and then check with the rook) **42 ♖b2 ♖e7 43 ♗c4 ♔g7 44 ♗xe6 ♖7xe6!** (excellent!) **45 g5**

After 45 ♖xb7+ ♔f6 the black king breaks through to g5 and the a3-pawn falls.

45...♖b3 46 ♖xb3 axb3 47 ♖d1?

A blunder, but 47 ♖b1 ♖e3 48 ♔f2 ♖c3 49 ♔e2 ♔f7 50 ♔d2 ♖xc5 51 ♖xb3 b5 52 ♖f3+ ♖f5 53 ♖c3 c5 54 ♖b3 c4 55 ♖g3 ♔e6 was also hopeless.

47...♖e2 0-1

The b-pawn queens.

The King's Indian Defence became a new and powerful current in the development of chess, which even the world champion was unable to control! Not without reason did Botvinnik write: 'Before Geller we did not properly understand King's Indian set-ups.' Apparently, in particular he had himself in mind, but certainly not Bronstein and Boleslavsky – the acknowledged leaders of this bold opening.

See what an inscription Geller himself wrote on a copy of his monograph on the King's Indian Defence (1980), which he presented to Bronstein: 'To an old friend with gratitude for the creative ideas which in their time attracted me into the ranks of King's Indian players, and have now led me to this, partly incomplete book.'

I remember how in 1975, at one of the sessions of the Botvinnik School, I chose the King's Indian Defence in a training game with Yusupov and played ...♘f6-h5-f4, directly into the path of the g3-pawn, with motifs similar to the Botvinnik-Tal clash (*Game No.128*), but only achieved a draw with enormous difficulty. Mikhail Moiseevich was unhappy with my play in the opening and instructed me to make a selection of the best King's Indian games, naming these players: Bronstein, Boleslavsky, Geller, Petrosian, Gligoric and Stein. I diligently recorded these games in a card index, studied them – and have retained a childhood love for the King's Indian Defence all my life.

Geller also defeated Smyslov in his favourite opening – in the deciding game of a match for the title of USSR Champion. This six-game match was organised after they had shared first place in the 22nd USSR Championship (Moscow 1955), a Zonal tournament, ahead of, incidentally, Botvinnik, Petrosian, Spassky and Keres.

Previously Geller had been very unsuccessful against Smyslov, and so this match, especially since it was the first in his career, was an ultra-serious test for him: one to one with the main contender for the throne, and perhaps already *de facto* the strongest player in the world! With the help of his second, Bondarevsky, Geller chose wise tactics: 'Usually Smyslov allowed me to be enterprising and very accurately exploited every slip, every weakening of the position. We decided that I should play extremely quietly and await the reaction of Smyslov to this unexpected turn of events.'

After six relatively colourless draws they began playing to the first win, and the long-awaited reaction set in: Smyslov grew nervous – the course of the struggle clearly did not suit him! In search of an advantage, he decided to employ the sharp Sämisch Variation against the King's Indian Defence for the first time in his life. This was a mistake, since he ended up on his opponent's territory, giving the latter a practical advantage.

Game 95

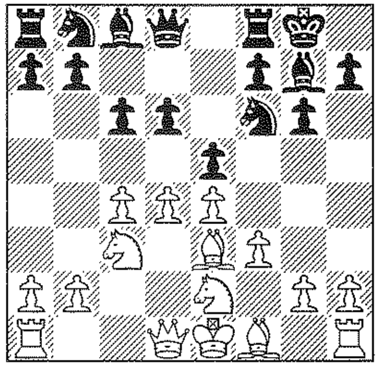
V.Smyslov-E.Geller

USSR Championship Play-off Match,
Moscow 1955, 7th game
King's Indian Defence E89

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3

In the fifth game Black did not have any problems after the alternative 3 g3 c6 4 ♗g2 d5 5 ♘d2 ♗g7 6 ♘gf3 0-0 7 0-0 ♘e4 8 b3 (8 ♕b3!?) 8...c5 9 ♗b2 ♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 dxc4 11 bxc4 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘c6 with equality. The play was more tense after 3...♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♘c3 c6 6 d5!? d6 7 ♘f3 e5 8 0-0 cxd5 9 cxd5 ♘bd7 (Smyslov-Geller, Amsterdam Candidates 1956).

3...♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 e5 7 ♘ge2 c6



8 d5?!

Rather early! 'After 8 ♕d2, which is undoubtedly best, I was planning the line 8...♘bd7 9 0-0-0 a6 10 ♔b1 b5 11 ♘c1 ♖e8 with a complicated game.' (Geller)

Another *tabiya* arises after 9 d5 cxd5 10 cxd5 a6 11 g4 h5 and now 12 ♗g5 (Botvinnik-Tal, Moscow 10th matchgame 1960), 12 g5 (Petrosian-Geller, 44th USSR Championship, Moscow; this has also been successfully played by Karpov), 12 h3 ♘h7 (Tal-Gligoric, Yugoslavia Candidates 1959; Timman-Kasparov, Amsterdam 1976) or 12...b5, as I played against Piket (Amsterdam 1996) and Ivanchuk (Dos Hermanas 1996).

8...cxd5 9 cxd5 ♘e8 10 ♕d2 (10 ♘c1?! ♗h6!) **10...f5**

The somewhat premature d4-d5 has allowed Black to put immediate pressure on the e4-pawn.

11 h3?!

'It is hard to understand how such a logical player as Smyslov could make such an illogical, passive and obviously bad move. 11 ♘c1 was necessary.' (Geller) Or 11 0-0-0 with double-edged play.

11...♘d7 12 g3?

Another unfortunate move. 'The only chance was 12 0-0-0 with the possibility of subsequent play on the c-file.' (Geller) Although, after 12...a6 (12...♘ef6?! 13 g4!) 13 g4 (justifying his h2-h3) 13...fxe4 14 fxe4 b5 Black has good counterplay against the white king.

12...♘b6 13 b3

If 13 ♘c1, then the reply 13...f4 was also good.

13...f4!

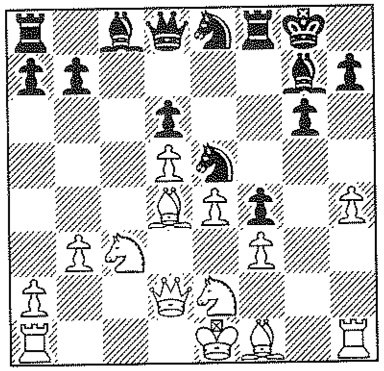
Launching an attack. It becomes evident that White has lost the opening battle: he has many weaknesses and his king is caught in the centre.

14 gxf4 exf4 15 ♗d4

'15 ♗xf4? fails to 15...♗xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♖xf4 17 ♘xf4 ♕h4+, but 15 ♗f2 was better, leaving the d4-square free for the knight.' (Geller) I agree, although after 15...♘d7 16 ♘d4 ♘e5 17 0-0-0 ♗d7 18 ♔b1 ♖c8 Black still has the initiative.

15...♘d7 (urgently to e5!) **16 h4 ♘e5**

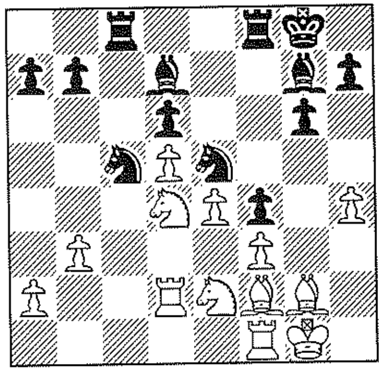
'A King's Indian player's dream! Nowadays, when all the typical positions have been studied, one cannot even hope to obtain such a comfortable game at an early stage.' (Geller)



17 ♗g2 ♗d7 18 ♗f2 ♖c8 19 ♘d4 ♕a5 20 ♖c1 ♘c7!

'The second knight aims for c5, from where it can invade at d3.' (Geller) Yes, White's position is unpleasant, but he still has defensive resources.

21 ♖c2 ♘a6 22 0-0 ♘c5 23 ♘ce2 (in view of the threat of ...♘cd3 White offers the exchange of queens and... overlooks a tactical stroke) **23...♕xd2 24 ♖xd2**



24...♘xe4!

'A rather lengthy combination. White's position is demolished at its seemingly most invulnerable point – e4!' (Geller)

25 fxe4 f3 26 ♘xf3?

The decisive mistake. According to Geller, '26 ♘e6 was better, although even then Black has a marked advantage: 26...fxe2 27 ♖e1 (27 ♖xe2? ♗b5) 27...♗h6! (*27...♗xe6 28 dxe6 ♖fe8 29 ♖dxe2 – G.K.*) 28 ♖dxe2 ♖xf2! 29 ♖xf2 ♘d3 30 ♖fe2 ♘xe1 31 ♖xe1 ♗d2 32 ♖e2 ♖c1+ 33 ♔h2 ♗e1 (*33...♗c3 is inadequate: 34 ♗h3 ♗e5+ 35 ♔g2 ♖c3 36 ♖f2 ♖g3+ 37 ♔f1 ♗b5+ 38 ♔e1 ♖e3+ 39 ♔d2 ♖d3+ 40 ♔c2 ♖c3+ 41 ♔d2 – G.K.*) 34 ♔h3 h5! 35 ♖e3 ♖c3 36 ♖xc3 ♗xc3, and, after the return of the black bishop to e1, nothing can prevent the black king's triumphant march into the centre of the board.'

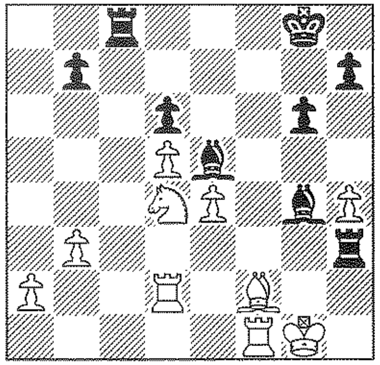
However, instead of 34 ♔h3?! White has the stronger 34 h5!, when there is still all to play for: 34...gxh5 35 ♗h3 h4 36 ♘d4! ♗g3+ 37 ♔g2 ♗xh3+ 38 ♔xh3 ♔f7 39 ♘f5 ♔f6 40 ♘xg3 hxg3 41 ♔xg3 ♔e5 42 ♖h2 ♖c3+ 43 ♔g4 ♔xe4 44 ♖xh7 ♖c2 45 a4 with saving chances.

As we see, Smyslov was clearly out of sorts on that day, not the least factor being the unfamiliar opening scheme. It would appear that he, like Botvinnik and other experienced masters of the classical trend, found it rather hard playing against the new-fangled King's Indian Defence. Especially when performed by Geller, the style of whom was aptly described by Bronstein:

'According to theory, at the start of the game White should aim to gain an advantage and Black to equalise. But Geller, to judge from his games, considers that an advantage in the opening should be obtained by the side that he represents. Remarkable skill in extracting the maximum from the opening, readiness at any moment to switch suddenly from positional schemes to open combinative play and then back again – these are the characteristic features of his play.'

26...♘xf3+ 27 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 28 ♗xa7 ♖h3 29 ♗f2 ♗e5 30 ♘d4 ♗g4

Efim Petrovich subtly judged that Black has a terrible attack for the pawn: it is not apparent how White can disentangle himself here.



31 ♗e1?

The final error. 'If 31 ♔g2 Black was intending to play the move 31...♖cc3.' (Geller) However, 31 a4! would have caused him most problems:

1) 31...♖f8 (if instead 31...♗h2+ 32 ♔g2 ♗f4, then 33 ♖a2 ♖h2+ 34 ♔g1 ♗h3 35 ♖e1) 32 a5 ♖f4 33 ♖c1 ♗h5! 34 ♖c8+ ♔f7 35 ♖c7+ ♔e8 36 ♖dc2 ♖g4+ 37 ♔f1 ♖h1+ 38 ♔e2 ♖gxh4+ 39 ♘f3 ♖xe4+ 40 ♔d3 ♗xf3 41 ♖c8+ ♔f7 42 ♖2c7+ ♔f6 43 ♖f8+ ♔g5 44 ♖xf3 ♖b4;

2) 31...♖h2!? 32 ♖d3 ♗h3 33 ♘f3 ♗xf1 34 ♔xf1 ♖c1+ 35 ♗e1 ♖h1+ (but not 35...♖a2?! 36 ♘xe5 dxe5 37 d6 ♖aa1 38 d7 ♖xe1+ 39 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 40 ♔h2 with equality) 36 ♔e2 ♗f4.

In both cases Black would have had various attacking possibilities and should win, but considerable accuracy would still have been demanded of him.

31...♖e3 (and the curtain comes down) **32 ♗f2 ♖xe4 33 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 34 ♗xe1 ♖c1 0-1**

Black wins after 35 ♔f2 ♗f6 or 35 ♔f1 ♗g3.

I believe that it was no accident that Geller kept quiet about 31 a4! Since the times of Nimzowitsch, Tarrasch, Steinitz and perhaps even Philidor, commentators have often avoided similar awkward moments. Commentaries to games served as didactic material, aimed at explaining events to the weak reader, and any variations that disrupted the author's logical construction were simply ignored. The main thing was to retain the logic, and there was no need to seek the truth! Perhaps the first who began to break with this tradition was Alekhine: his commentaries are markedly more objective (Chigorin also aimed for this, but sometimes, on the contrary, he was excessively subjective).

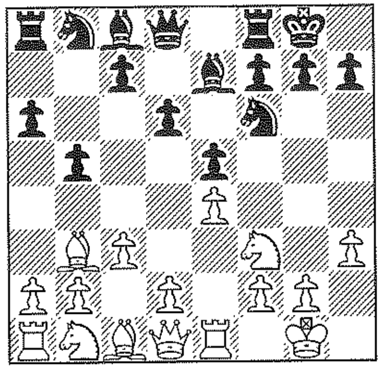
Since the mid-20th century the tone of the mentor from the times of Steinitz and Tarrasch gradually began to disappear, but since it dominated for a very long time, both approaches to game annotations are still retained. Typical representatives of the first approach are Smyslov, Karpov and Kramnik (why spoil the picture and belittle your royal dignity with some uncomfortable 'trifles'?), and those of the second – Botvinnik, Fischer, Korchnoi and Kasparov. Of course, Geller also passionately sought the chess truth, but he, like many legends of the past, sometimes hid unexpected nuances from the readers on general grounds, in order not to disrupt the logic and harmony of chess.

Geller started splendidly – 3½ out of 4 – in the next Zonal, the 25th USSR Championship (Riga 1958), which is unforgettably linked with the name of Tal. His game against Spassky was awarded a special prize as one of the best in the tournament.

Game 96
E.Geller-B.Spassky
USSR Championship,
Riga 1958, 3rd round
Ruy Lopez C95

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d6 9 h3 ♘b8

Breyer's ageless variation, which has served Spassky faithfully for more than 40 years: here Black can calmly develop his pieces, without fearing any surprises.



10 d4 ♘bd7 11 c4

An aggressive plan that was popular at the time. We shall return to the main line – 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 – in Volume 3.

11...♗b7

11...b4?! 12 c5 ♗b7 is inadequate on account of 13 ♕c2! exd4 14 c6! d3 15 ♕c4 ♘b6 16 cxb7 ♘xc4 17 bxa8♕ ♕xa8 18 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 19 ♗xd3 d5 20 a3! (Geller-Filip, Amsterdam Candidates 1956).

However, it is more solid to play 11...c6! with the idea of 12 ♘c3 b4, equalising (Geller-Darga, Havana 1963) or 12 a3 bxc4 13 ♗xc4 ♘xe4! 14 ♖xe4 d5. White has also tried 12 c5 ♕c7 13 cxd6 ♗xd6 14 ♗g5 exd4! 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 with equality (Gligoric-Petrosian, Los Angeles 1963; Fischer-Portisch, Santa Monica 1966), 12 cxb5 axb5 13 ♘c3 ♗a6! with equality (Geller-Karpov, 39th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1971), 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗h4 ♘h5! with equality (Tukmakov-Karpov, Leningrad Interzonal 1973) and 12 ♕c2 ♗b7 or even 12...a5 (Geller-Portisch, Portoroz 1973).

12 ♘c3 c6 13 a3

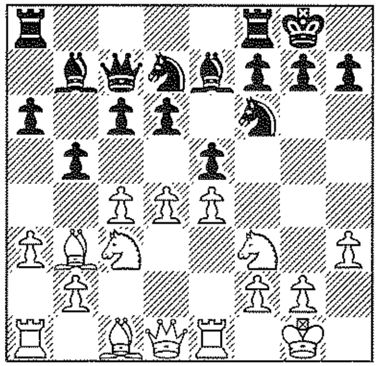
Preventing ...b5-b4. Serious consideration should have been given to 13 c5, but Geller, as he put it, did not want to force matters.

13...♕c7?!

Black also fails to equalise by 13...h6 14 ♗e3 ♖e8 15 ♖c1 ♗f8 16 cxb5 (Hort) or 13...♖b8 14 ♗a2! (14 ♗e3!? – Boleslavsky) 14...a5 (14...bxc4 15 dxe5!) 15 cxb5 cxb5 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 exd4 18 ♘xd4 d5!? (Matanovic-Smyslov, Yugoslavia-USSR match, Belgrade 1956) 19 e5! ♗xb4 20 exf6 ♗xc3 21 fxg7 with an attack.

'As was shown by Keres (*Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1958), Black should have played 13...exd4 14 ♘xd4 bxc4 15 ♗xc4 d5!' writes Geller, but I do not agree with this: after 16 ♘xc6!? ♗xc6 17 exd5 ♘b6 (17...♗b7 18 d6) 18 dxc6 ♘xc4 19 ♕e2 ♕d4 20 ♕xe7 ♖fe8 21 ♗e3 ♘xe3 22 fxe3 ♕c4 23 ♕c7 ♖ac8 24 ♕f4 or, even better, 16 exd5 cxd5 17 ♘xd5! ♘xd5 18 ♘f5 ♘7f6 19 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 20 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 21 ♖xe7 ♖d1+ 22 ♔h2 White remains a pawn up.

However, the idea itself of relieving the tension in the centre is correct: 14...♘c5! is more accurate, and only if 15 ♗a2 – 15...bxc4 16 ♗xc4 d5! 17 exd5 cxd5 18 ♗a2 ♘fe4 (the game is equal) 19 ♘f5 ♘xc3 20 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 21 bxc3 ♘e6 22 ♗xd5 ♖fd8 23 c4 ♗xd5 24 cxd5 ♕c5 25 ♗e3 ♕xd5 ½-½ (R.Byrne-Spassky, Baden 1980).



14 ♗g5 ♖ae8

A prophylactic defence of the bishop at e7. 'After 14...♖fe8 15 ♖c1 the black queen has no convenient retreat square, while if 14...h6 there follows 15 ♗e3 and the king's knight reaches f5 unhindered.' (Geller) For example: 15...♖ac8 16 ♖c1 ♕b8 17 ♗a2 (17 ♘h4!?) 17...♗d8 18 b4 exd4 19 ♘xd4 bxc4 20 ♗f4! ♘e5 21 ♘f5. Little is changed by 14...♖ad8 15 ♕c2 ♕b8 16 ♖ad1 ♖fe8 17 ♗a2 etc.

15 ♖c1 ♕b8 16 ♗a2!

Also a prophylactic move: the equalising 16...bxc4 17 ♗xc4 d5! was threatened, whereas now after this White interposes 17 dxe5! – 17...dxe5 18 ♗xc4 with a clear advantage.

16...♔h8 (effectively an admission of Black's opening failure: he has been unable to free himself and can only wait) **17 b4!**

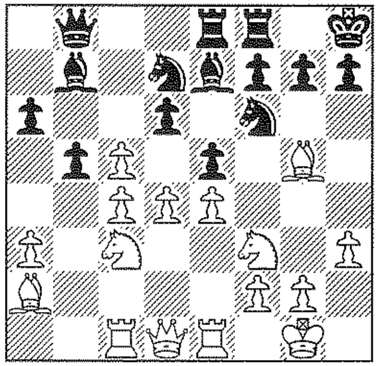
Threatening 18 dxe5 dxe5 19 c5 with a complete bind.

17...c5!?

'The only way of complicating the game, but it too is insufficient for equality. According to Keres, it would have been useful to include 17...h6, and if 18 ♗e3, then 18...c5 would have gained in strength.' (Geller) However, in my opinion, then 19 d5! ♖c8 20 ♘d2 is unpleasant, initiating play on the queenside, where White has clearly the better prospects: the position is a variety of the 'Spanish' structure that is ruinous for Black.

18 bxc5

It is surprising that here too the commentators did not consider 18 d5!? – although in this case after 18...♖c8 White does not have 19 ♘d2? on account of 19...♘xd5, whereas after 19 ♕e2 his advantage is not so great.



18...exd4?!

A somewhat unfortunate exchange. According to Geller, '18...dxc5 19 d5 b4 would have afforded White a pleasant choice between 20 ♘a4 a5 21 axb4 axb4 22 ♗b3 with strong positional pressure, and 20 axb4 cxb4

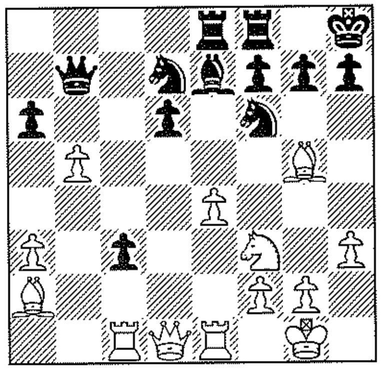
21 ♘a4 ♘c5 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 24 ♘h4 a5 25 ♗b3 with an attack on the kingside.'

But in my view, in the first of these variations White does not have such a great plus and the position is rather complicated, while in the second, instead of 24...a5?!, it is better to play 24...♗c8, for example: 25 ♕f3 ♕d6 26 ♗b3 ♖g8 27 ♖a1 ♖g7 28 ♖a2 ♖eg8 with a blockade on the dark squares and definite counter-chances.

19 c6!

A strong reply! Spassky had reckoned on 19 ♘xd4 dxc5 20 ♘f5 b4! with counterplay.

19...dxc3 (19...♗xc6? 20 ♘xd4) **20 cxb7 ♕xb7 21 cxb5**



21...♕xb5?!

'The e4-pawn is immune: 21...axb5 22 ♖xc3 ♘xe4? 23 ♖xe4 ♕xc4 24 ♖e3.' (Geller) But it was correct to play 22...♗d8! (threatening ...♗a5) 23 ♖c2! ♖xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 25 ♖b2, and although White has pressure, it is difficult to win in view of the limited material. 21...h6!? is also interesting – after 22 bxa6 ♕xa6 the a3-pawn is lost, while if 22 ♗f4 there follows 22...axb5 with a threat to the e4-pawn.

Of course, a defence such as 21...axb5 22 ♖xc3 ♗d8 or 21...h6 is hard to find at the board, but Geller also did not do this in his analysis, since he underestimated his opponent's defensive resources. It is another matter with the computer, which impassively analyses all possible variations...

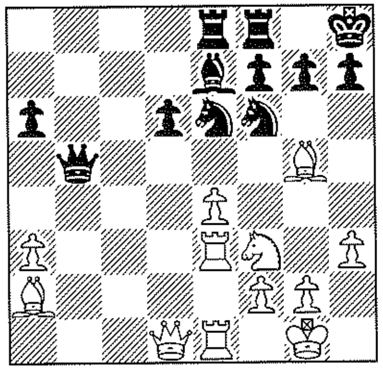
22 ♖xc3 ♘c5

'It is again taboo: 22...♘xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♗xg5 24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♗xf7 ♖f8 26 ♕xd6 with a positional and a material advantage.' (Geller) I would add 25...♖d8 26 ♗c4 ♕a5 27 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 28 ♗xa6 ♕a5 29 ♖c8 ♖xc8 30 ♗xc8 and wins.

Since after 22...♕b2 White has the simple 23 ♕c2, or if 22...♘e5 – 23 ♘d4 and ♘f5, Spassky makes a natural move with his knight, but after White's reply it transpires that he has a very difficult position all the same.

23 ♖ce3 ♘e6

There was a more tenacious move that is not mentioned by any of the commentators: 23...♘fxe4!? 24 ♗xe7 (24 ♖xe4? ♘xe4) 24...♖xe7 25 ♘g5 (the 'Spanish' bishop comes into play!) 25...d5 (25...f5? 26 ♘xh7!) 26 ♗xd5 ♖d7 27 a4! (not an obvious move; 27 ♘xh7?! ♔xh7 28 ♕h5+ ♔g8 29 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 30 ♕xb5 axb5 31 ♖xe4 ♖a7 leads to a draw) 27...♘xa4 (or 27...♕a5 28 ♘xh7! ♔xh7 29 ♕h5+ and ♗xe4) 28 ♘xf7+ ♖fxf7 29 ♖xe4 (the weakness of the back rank!) 29...♖f8 30 ♖e8 ♖d8 31 ♗c6! ♖dxe8 32 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 33 ♗xb5 axb5 34 ♕h5 ♖b8 35 ♕e5 ♖c8 36 ♕xb5, and White should nevertheless win.



24 e5! (this is the decisive breakthrough) **24...♘g4?**

A belated attempt to confuse matters. According to Geller, '24...dxe5 25 ♖xe5 would also have led to the loss of a pawn,' although after 25...♕b2 26 ♗xe6 fxe6 27 ♖xe6 there would still have been some play in the position:

1) 27...♗c5 28 ♖1e2! (but not 28 ♗xf6?! ♕xf2+ 29 ♔h2 ♖xe6 30 ♖xe6 ♖xf6 31 ♖e2 ♖xf3 32 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 33 ♕d8+ ♖f8 34 ♕a5 ♗d6+ 35 g3 ♖f6, setting up a fortress) 28...♕xa3 29 ♗xf6 ♖xe6 30 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 31 ♖xe6 with a technically won position;

2) 27...♖d8 (the best chance) 28 ♕a4 (28 ♗c1!? is quieter) 28...♕xa3 29 ♕h4 ♗b4 30 ♗xf6 (but not 30 ♖xf6?! ♗xe1 31 ♘xe1 ♖xf6 32 ♗xf6 ♖c8 33 ♗c5 ♕e7) 30...gxf6 31 ♖f1 also with a big advantage, but not as great as in the game.

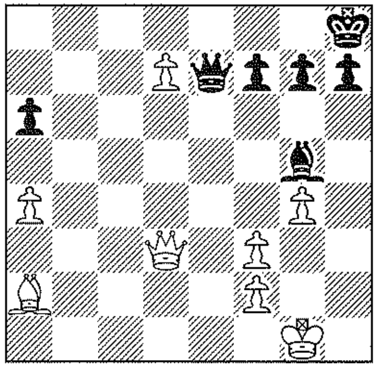
25 hxg4 ♘xg5 26 exd6 ♘xf3+ 27 gxf3 ♗g5

White has acquired a passed d-pawn, and here the opposite-coloured bishops do not help Black – in fact they also give the opponent an attack.

28 a4

Time-trouble! As Geller pointed out, he could have won more quickly by 28 ♗c4! ♕d7 (28...♖xe3 29 ♗xb5 ♖xe1+ 30 ♕xe1 axb5 31 d7 and ♕e8) 29 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 30 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 31 d7 ♕f8 32 ♗xa6.

28...♕d7 29 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 30 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 31 d7 ♕f8 (31...♕e7 32 f4) **32 ♕e2!** (with the threat of ♕e8) **32...♕e7 33 ♕d3**



33...h6

Black cannot disentangle himself: if 33...g6 White wins by 34 f4! (34 ♔g2 ♕d8 35 ♗xf7 is also possible) 34...♕e1+ 35 ♔g2 ♗d8 36 ♗xf7 ♔g7 37 ♗c4 ♗b6 38 g5! ♕xf2+ 39 ♔h3.

34 ♗c4

According to Geller, 'after 34 ♗xf7 ♕xf7 35 d8♕+ ♗xd8 36 ♕xd8+ ♔h7 37 ♕d3+ ♕g6 White would have had to work out a pawn endgame at the board,' but in my opinion, after 38 ♕c4! there is nothing to work out: the game is over.

34...a5 35 ♗xf7! ♗h4 (35...♕xf7 36 d8♕+ ♗xd8 37 ♕xd8+ ♔h7 38 ♕xa5 ♕xf3 39 ♕f5+!) **36 ♔g2 ♗f6 37 ♗c4 ♕d8 38 ♕d5 ♗g5 39 ♕f7 1-0**

The threat is 40 ♕e8+ ♔h7 41 ♗d3+. A good, fighting game.

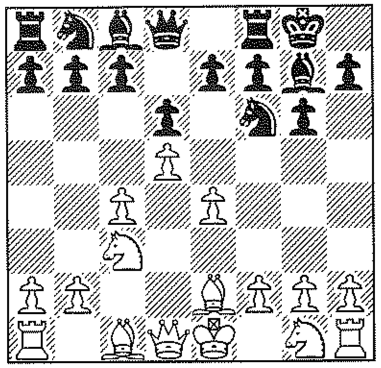
After this win Geller was heading the tournament, but Spassky soon caught up with him, and before the 12th round they shared the lead. But then both lost dramatically to Tal and in the end, alas, neither qualified for the Interzonal tournament. This was the only Candidates cycle that Geller missed between 1953 and 1971!

He gave his next 'King's Indian lesson' in the 1961 USSR Team Cup, the championship of the sports societies, where all the strongest players usually competed. Of course, in such tournaments the motivation of the participants was somewhat lower than in the fierce world championship elimination events, but on the other hand it was possible to experiment and to play at least a little for pleasure. It is probably this that explains Petrosian's opening ruse...

Game 97
T.Petrosian-E.Geller
USSR Team Cup, Moscow 1961
King's Indian Defence E73

1 c4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 d5?!

'Had such a move been made by a player of other than Petrosian's class, he would have been reproached for his lack of knowledge of the basic laws of opening play.' (Geller) Apparently Petrosian was aiming to create a position that was unfamiliar to his opponent, hoping that Geller, an inveterate time-trouble sufferer, would spend all his time searching for a refutation.



6...♘a6!

The d5-pawn could have been attacked immediately, but Geller, with his colossal King's Indian experience, first plays his knight to c5, emphasising the drawbacks of 6 d5.

7 ♗g5 ♘c5 8 f3?!

A move which is good with a black pawn at e5 and the g7-bishop blocked in, but here this bishop is operating at full power! As Gufeld joked: 'Many praise the Sämisch Variation, but has anyone asked the opinion of the king's knight regarding the move f2-f3?' Especially with the bishop on e2...

Of course, it is better to play 8 ♕c2 c6 9 ♘f3 cxd5 10 cxd5 ♗d7 11 ♖c1 ♖c8 12 ♕b1 (Uhlmann-Geller, Moscow 1967), although after 12...h6 Black has excellent development and a comfortable game.

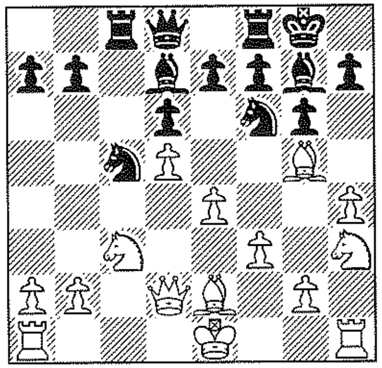
8...c6 9 ♕d2

'Additional weaknesses would appear in White's position after the "active" 9 b4 ♘a6 10 ♖b1 cxd5 11 cxd5 ♗d7, when the c-file is under Black's control.' (Geller) But after the continuation 12 ♗xa6 bxa6 13 ♘ge2 White would solve the problem of his king's knight and would not experience any particular difficulties. Therefore 9...♘cd7!? is more interesting, when 10 ♘h3? ♘xd5 is bad for White, while if 10 ♖b1, then 10...a5!

9...cxd5 10 cxd5 ♗d7 11 h4

'Not for the sake of an attack,' writes Geller, 'but merely to develop the king's knight. Isn't this the best indication of how unconvincing White's opening strategy has been?'

11...♖c8 (in my view, 11...♘h5!? 12 g4 ♘g3 13 ♖h2 ♕a5 came into consideration, for example: 14 ♗d1? ♗b5! 15 ♔f2 ♘f1 and wins) **12 ♘h3**



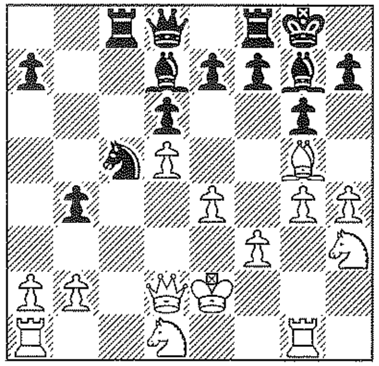
12...b5! 13 ♘d1?!

A crucial moment! According to Geller, 'White is forced to defend passively: if 13 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 14 ♗xb5 there would follow 14...♘fxe4! (*14...♖b8 15 ♗c4 ♘fxe4 16 fxe4 ♖xb2 17 ♕e3 – G.K.*) 15 fxe4 ♘xe4 16 ♕b4 (otherwise 16...♕a5+ is unpleasant) 16...♘g3, and in spite of his extra piece, White's scattered forces create a sad impression.'

However, after 17 ♖g1 ♕b6 18 ♕b3 ♘e4 19 ♗c6 ♕a5+ 20 ♔f1 ♖b8 there is no direct win for Black; he retains the initiative, of course, but he is a piece down. Therefore, in my view, instead of 14...♘fxe4 it is better to play 14...♘h5!?, exploiting the disharmony in the placing of the white pieces: 15 ♖b1 (15 ♗e3 ♖b8) 15...♘g3 16 ♖g1 ♖b8 17 ♗c4 ♕c7 with various threats.

At any event, White should have taken on b5, since now his position is simply hopeless.

13...♘h5 14 g4 (14 0-0? ♗xh3) **14...♘g3 15 ♖g1 ♘xe2 16 ♔xe2 b4!**



'Preparing an invasion on the weakened light squares. In such a situation the absence of the light-squared bishop is soon bound to tell.' (Geller)

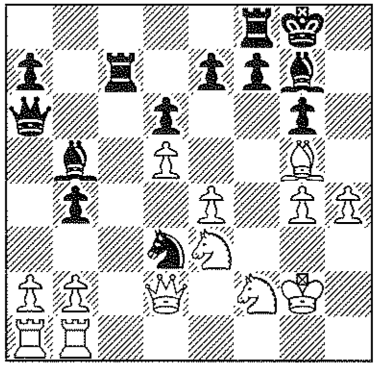
17 ♔f2 (not 17 ♕xb4?! ♗a4, and then ...♖b8, ...♗xd2 and ...♖xb2) **17...♕a5 18 ♘e3**

Parrying the threat of ...♘b3 and covering the c2-square, but not d3.

18...♕a6! 19 ♔g2 h6! (an important interposition) **20 ♗f4** (not 20 ♗xe7? ♖fe8) **20...♘d3 21 ♖gb1 h5**

'Having drawn away White's heavy pieces to the defence of the queenside, Black begins probing the weaknesses in the immediate vicinity of the white king.' (Geller)

22 ♗g5 hxg4 23 fxg4 ♖c7 24 ♘f2 (if 24 ♗xe7, then 24...♖e8 25 ♗xd6 ♖cc8 26 ♗g3 ♖xe4 etc.) **24...♗b5**



25 ♘h3?

Missing his last chance. 'White should have tried to complicate the game somehow by 25 a4!, with the probable sequel 25...♘xf2 (*? – G.K.*) 26 axb5 ♘xe4 etc.' writes Geller, overlooking 27 ♕xb4, winning. My suggestion is 25...♗c4!? 26 ♘xc4 ♘xf2 27 ♘xd6 exd6 28 ♔xf2 b3 29 ♖c1 ♖xc1 30 ♖xc1 ♕xa4 with an obvious advantage to Black, although here White has better drawing chances than in the game.

25...♖fc8 26 h5 (desperation; the white rooks are paralysed) **26...♕b6 27 hxg6 fxg6 28 ♔h2 ♕d4 29 ♕g2 ♖f8 30 b3 ♘c5 31 ♖d1 ♕xe4 32 ♖ac1 ♗d3 33 ♖d2 ♗c3 34 ♖f2 ♕xg2+**

34...♕c5+ was simpler, with great gain of material.

35 ♔xg2 ♗e4+ 36 ♔g3 ♘d3 37 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 38 ♖f1+ ♔g7 39 ♘f4 ♗e5! (39...♘xf4 40 ♔xf4 was less good) **40 ♘c4 ♘xf4 41 ♗xf4 ♗c3 42 ♖d1 ♖c5 43 ♗e3**

If 43 ♘e3, then 43...♖a5. 'Now an exchange occurs, but it is a clearly unequal one: the black passed pawns in the centre cannot be stopped.' (Geller)

43...♖xd5 44 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 45 ♗xa7 ♗e4 46 ♗b6 d5 47 ♘a5 ♔f6 48 ♘c6 e5 49 ♗c5 d4 50 ♘xb4 d3 0-1

In this game Black was able to make use of the basic collection of ideas, out of which the King's Indian Defence is formed.

Another who found it hard to play against Geller was the young Fischer, although their first meeting (Bled 1961) ended in his favour. They then met in the Stockholm Interzonal 1962 (1. Fischer – 17½ out of 22; 2-3. Geller and Petrosian – 15) and, a couple of months later, in the Candidates tournament on the distant island of Curaçao.

It stands to reason that, after his triumph in Stockholm, Fischer arrived in Curaçao expecting to win. He was the youngest participant, and it appeared that the tropical heat over the marathon distance of 28 rounds should be an ally for him. However, his problems began from the very start: in the first round he suddenly lost to Benko, and in the second he stumbled against Geller.

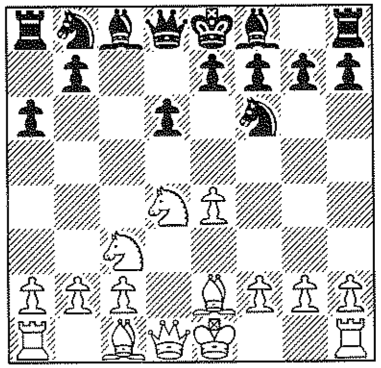
It is well known that both Fischer and Geller were distinguished by their uncommonly principled choice of openings. Against 1 e4 the former played only the Sicilian Defence and always the Najdorf Variation, to which the latter replied exclusively with 6 ♗e2. It was not surprising that a sharp theoretical duel ensued between them.

Game 98

E.Geller-R.Fischer

Candidates Tournament,
Curaçao 1962, 2nd round
Sicilian Defence B92

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2



'A deceptively quiet continuation, introduced by Smyslov and worked into a powerful weapon by Geller. White simply continues his development and is neutral about the Najdorf: neither trying to refute it nor being afraid.' (Mednis)

6...e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e7

The most accurate move order. The alternative of those years was 7...♗e6?! 8 0-0 (in the mid-1970s they found 8 f4 ♕c7 9 g4! with a dangerous initiative) 8...♘bd7, for example:

1) 9 f4 ♕c7 10 f5 ♗c4 11 a4 ♖c8?! (11...♗e7!) 12 ♗e3 (12 ♔h1!) 12...♗e7 (12...d5!?) 13 a5 h5? 14 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 15 ♖a4 ♕c7 16 h3 h4 17 ♖f2 b5 18 axb6 ♘xb6 19 ♗xb6! ♕xb6 20 ♕e2 ♖a8 21 ♔h2 0-0 22 ♖f1 ♖a7 23 ♖fa1 ♖fa8 24 ♖1a2 ♗d8 25 ♘a5! (a model plan with the occupation of the d5-square) 25...♖c8 26 ♘c4 ♕c6 27 ♘e3 a5 28 ♖c4 ♕a6 29 b3 ♗b6 30 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 31 ♘ed5 ♘xd5 32 ♘xd5 and White won (Geller-Najdorf, Zürich Candidates 1953);

2) 9 a4 ♗e7 10 f4 ♕c7 11 f5 ♗c4 12 a5 0-0 13 ♗e3 b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 ♔h1 ♖fc8 16 ♗xb6! ♕xb6 17 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♕e2 (also a classical *tabiya*) 18...♖b4?! 19 ♖a2 ♕b7 (or 19...h6 20 ♖fa1 ♗f8 21 ♖a4! Karpov-Bronstein, Moscow 1971) 20 ♘a5 ♕c7 21 ♘d5! ♘xd5 22 exd5 ♖b5 23 ♕d2 ♕c5 24 c4 with the advantage (Geller-Fischer, Curaçao Candidates 1962, 16th round).

Ten years later 18...♖ac8! 19 ♖a2 ♗d8 20 ♖fa1 ♕b7 with equality was discovered. White's plan was neutralised, and nothing was added to this by 17 ♖a4 ♗b5! 18 ♘xb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 20 ♕d3 ♕c6 21 ♘d2 ½-½ (Anand-Gelfand, Moscow 1989).

8 0-0 0-0

Again the most accurate, although 8...♗e6 9 f4 ♕c7 is also played, not fearing 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♔h1 0-0 12 ♗e3 exf4 13 ♖xf4 ♘e5 (Karpov-Polugayevsky, Moscow 4th, 6th and 8th matchgames 1974). My own opponents have tried 10 f5 (Oll, Moscow Olympiad 1994), 10 ♘d5 (Anand, Linares 2000) and 10 g4 (Ye Jiangchuan, Batumi rapidplay 2001).

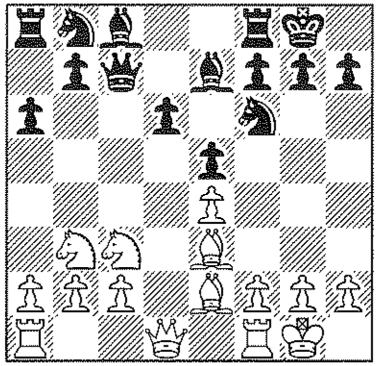
9 ♗e3

Currently the subtle 9 ♔h1 is also in vogue, while Geller at the end of his career tried 9 ♖e1 with the idea of 9...♗e6 10 ♗f1 ♘bd7 11 ♘d5 or 9...♘bd7 10 ♗f1 b5 11 a4 b4 12 ♘d5.

9...♕c7?!

The first steps in the theory of this variation: without f2-f4 having been played yet it is rather early to determine the position of the queen! 9...♗e6 is correct, for example: 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 a5 ♖c8 12 f3 ♕c7 13 ♕d2 ♖fd8 14 ♖fd1 d5! with equality (Geller-Ivkov, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970).

Later both Geller and his protégé Karpov adopted 10 ♕d2 ♘bd7 11 a4 with the sequel 11...♘b6 12 a5 ♘c4 13 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 14 ♖fd1 or 11...♖c8 12 a5 ♕c7 13 ♖fc1!? ♕c6 14 ♗f3 ♗c4 15 ♖a4 (Karpov-Portisch, London 1982). Here too equality was soon found, and 10 ♘d5!? ♘bd7 11 ♕d3 ♗xd5 12 exd5 gradually became the modern *tabiya*.



10 a4

Now White has no reason to play f2-f4: the classical plan with a queenside bind and ♘d5 is far more effective.

10...♗e6

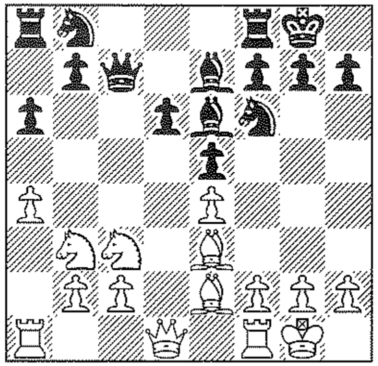
The continuation of a heated opening dispute that flared up at the Interzonal tournament in Stockholm 1962:

1) 10...♘bd7 11 a5 b5 12 axb6 ♘xb6 13 ♘a5 ♗e6 14 ♕d2 ♖fd8 15 ♗xb6! ♕xb6 16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 exd5 ♗d7 18 ♖a2 and Black's a6-pawn and his c6-square are weak (Geller-Stein, 3rd round);

2) 10...b6 11 ♕d2 ♗e6 12 ♖fd1 ♘bd7 13 f3 ♕b7 14 ♘c1! ♖fd8 15 ♘1a2 ♘c5 16 ♘b4 a5 17 ♘bd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 19 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♖xd5 with a clearly better ending (Geller-Bolbochan, 8th round);

3) 10...b6 11 ♕d2 ♗b7 12 f3 ♗c6?! 13 ♖fd1 ♘bd7 14 ♕e1 h6 15 ♕f1! ♕b7 16 ♗c4 ♖fc8 17 ♖d2 ♘f8 18 ♘c1! ♘g6 19 ♘1a2 b5 (otherwise White has a bind) 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♗xb5, and after 21...♗xb5 22 ♕xb5 ♕xb5 23 ♘xb5 ♖a5 24 ♘bc3 ♖ca8 Black just about managed to save himself (Geller-Fischer, 18th round). I would perhaps have risked playing 21...d5!? 22 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 23 exd5 ♖ca6 24 ♕c4 ♗d6 25 b4 (25 ♖b1 e4) 25...e4 26 b5 ♖a3, but Bobby did not like extreme material sacrifices with unclear consequences.

It stands to reason that the character of the play in the above games did not satisfy Fischer, and he switched to a different track. But he went from the frying pan into the fire...



11 a5!

In Stockholm they played 11 f4 exf4 12 ♖xf4 ♘bd7 13 ♘d5 ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♘e5 15 a5 ♖fe8 16 ♗b6 ♕c8 17 ♗d3 ♗d8 (Yanofsky-Fischer, 12th round) and 11 ♕d2 ♘bd7 12 f3 ♘b6 13 a5 ♘c4 14 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 15 ♖fd1 ♖ac8 (German-Stein, 21st round), in each case with equality.

11...♘bd7

After 11...♕c6 the following continuation was still fresh in the memory: 12 ♗f3 ♘bd7 13 ♘d5! ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♕b5 (14...♕c4 15 ♘d2 ♕b5 16 ♕b1! – Stein) 15 ♕d3! ♖fc8 16 ♖fc1 ♕xd3?! (16...♕b4 was better) 17 cxd3 g6 18 ♖c3! with an excellent endgame for White (Smyslov-Tal, Yugoslavia Candidates 1959).

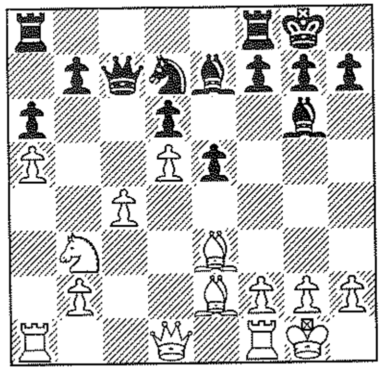
12 ♘d5 (with gain of tempo!) **12...♘xd5**

'Fischer likes the two bishops and without extreme necessity he rarely parts with them.' (Geller) Besides, after 12...♗xd5 13 exd5 Black is almost completely paralysed, e.g. 13...b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 c4! ♘bd7 16 ♘a5!

♖fc8 17 b4, 15...♘xc4 16 ♕c2 ♖fc8 17 ♖fc1 ♘xe3 18 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 19 ♖xc7 ♘exd5 20 ♖b7! or 15...a5 16 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 17 ♘xa5 ♘bxd5 18 ♗d2 ♘f4 19 b4 etc. (Bradvarevic-Nemeth, Bled 1963).

13 exd5 ♗f5 14 c4 ♗g6?!

A loss of time. 'Correct was 14...♖ac8 followed by ...♕d8 and an attempt at exchanging the black bishops via ...♗g5 (if White plays ♕d2 then first ...h7-h6).' (Mednis)



15 ♖c1!

A surprise: the immediate breakthrough 16 c5! is threatened. A more passive continuation is 15 ♔h1?! ♖ac8 16 ♕d2 ♕d8 17 ♖ac1 h6 18 f4 exf4 19 ♗xf4 ♗g5 with a rapid draw (Smyslov-Gligoric, Havana 1962).

15...♘c5?

A serious positional mistake. One of the weaknesses of the young Fischer was that he always tried to nip his opponent's plans in the bud. But... 'The attempt to blockade the critical c4-square proves unsuccessful,' writes Geller. 'He should have played 15...f5 16 c5 dxc5 17 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 18 b4 f4 (*Rabar's variation 18...♖fc8 19 bxc5 ♕xa5 20 d6 has been expanded by Dvoretsky: 20...♗f6 21 ♕b3+ ♔h8 22 ♕xb7 f4 23 c6! fxe3 24 d7 ♖cb8 25 c7 or 23 d7!? ♖cb8 24 c6! – G.K.*) 19 ♗xc5 ♗d6 (*though here 20 ♗g4 e4 21 f3! is strong – G.K.*) or 16...f4 17 cxd6 ♕xd6 18 ♗c5 ♘xc5 19 ♘xc5, although White's position would have remained attractive.'

I think that after 19...e4!? 20 ♘xb7 ♕e5 21 d6 ♗f6 Black has definite counterplay for the pawn (with ...f4-f3) and White's advantage is not so obvious.

Therefore after 15...f5 the typical reply 16 f4! is stronger, for example: 16...exf4 17 ♗xf4 ♘c5 (17...♗f6 18 c5!) 18 ♔h1 ♗f6 19 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 20 ♕d2 and b2-b4, setting up a passed pawn with unopposed pressure on the queenside. Evidently Mednis was right: 15...♖ac8 or 15...♖fc8 was better.

16 ♘xc5 dxc5 17 b4!

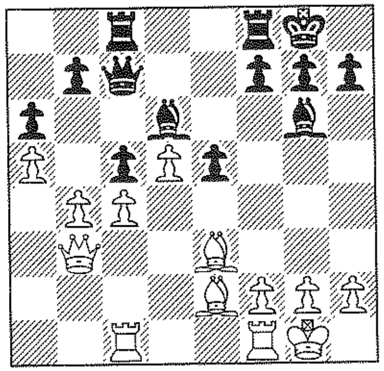
This excellent reply (breaking the blockade!) was, of course, underestimated by Fischer.

17...♖ac8

'Black's game can no longer be saved. 17...cxb4 is bad in view of 18 ♗b6 ♕d7 19 c5 (*19 ♕b3!? – G.K.*) with a complete bind (*although Dvoretsky suggests 19...♗g5! with the idea of 20 ♖c4?! b3!, while after 20 ♖a1 the position is not so clear – G.K.*). And 17...f5 would now merely have led to additional weaknesses.' (Geller) For example: 18 ♕b3 f4 19 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 20 bxc5 ♕xc5 21 ♕b6 etc.

In his evaluation of Black's position as lost, Geller's maximalism is evident. In general he is possibly right, the passed d5-pawn is strong, but there is still much play to come and the winning path is thorny.

18 ♕b3 ♗d6



19 ♖fd1

'Threatening to win a pawn, which did not work immediately – 19 bxc5 ♗xc5 20 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 21 ♕xb7 ♕xa5 22 ♖a1 ♕d2.' (Geller)

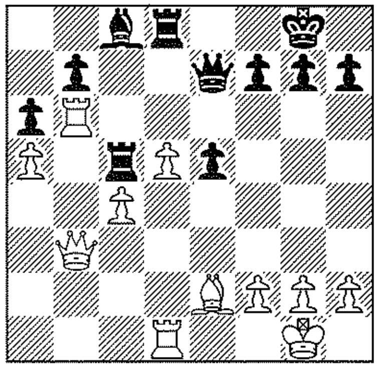
But, in my opinion, after 23 ♖fe1! a5 24 ♗f1 Black has a very difficult position: the passed c- and d-pawns will promote sooner or later. This is also the case after 21...♖b8 (instead of 21...♕xa5) 22 ♕xa6 ♖b2 23 ♖ce1! (23 ♖fe1? ♗d3) 23...♖a2 (according to Mednis 'and Black has good practical chances of a draw') 24 ♕b6 ♖xa5 25 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 26 f4 and wins.

Thus the immediate 19 bxc5!? should come into consideration, since it would have forced the play.

19...♕e7 20 bxc5 ♗xc5 21 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 (21...♕xc5 22 d6!) **22 ♖a1!**

'The manoeuvre of the rook to b6 will create the combined threat of winning the b7-pawn and advancing d5-d6.' (Geller)

22...♖d8 23 ♖a4 ♗f5! 24 ♖b4 ♗c8 (Fischer defends with all his might) **25 ♖b6**



25...♖d6

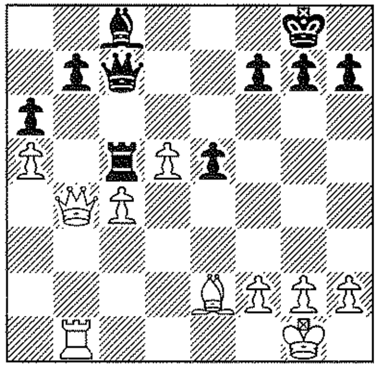
According to Geller, 'The capture of the a-pawn would have aggravated Black's position: 25...♖xa5 26 d6 ♕d7 27 ♗f3, and the b-pawn cannot be defended.' However, the computer discovers a clever resource – 27...♕a4! 28 ♕d3 ♖c5 29 ♗d5 ♗f5, although 30 ♕d2 leaves White with the advantage: the b7-pawn is indeed doomed. Another idea is 26...♕e8!? 27 ♗f3? e4, but 27 ♕e3 ♕a4 28 h3 is correct.

Even so, 25...♖xa5!? was the best chance and it was in these variations that a way to save the game should have been sought. I am sure that the later Fischer and any modern grandmaster would have taken the a5-pawn: with that pawn on the board Black has a strategically lost position, whereas without it White would have had to play very specifically and accurately, since the only weapon left in his arsenal would be his passed d-pawn, and in some cases it could now have suited Black to go into an ending.

This, incidentally, is a striking example of the evolution of the approach to chess. I remember the sixth game of my first match with Karpov (1984/85), where in a similar situation my opponent, almost without thinking, captured the a2-pawn with his knight. Later he explained: I realised that it would be hard to combat the passed d-pawn, and I decided at least to grab a pawn.' Just in case! And in the present game the a5-pawn is even more important, since it is restraining two black pawns...

26 ♕b4 ♕c7 27 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 28 ♖b1 ♕c7

'Allows White a successful regrouping. The required move was 28...g6 preventing back-rank mates, and with the tactical point that 29 ♕a3? fails to 29...♖xd5!' (Mednis) But after 29 ♕a4 ♗d7 30 ♕a1! ♕c7 31 ♖b6 ♗b5 32 h3 ♗xc4 33 d6 ♕c8 34 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 35 ♕xe5 Black's defence is difficult.



29 ♕a4! (again threatening ♖b6) **29...♗d7 30 ♕a3 ♖xa5**

'Obviously hopeless is 30...♗c8 31 ♖b6 etc. Capturing with the queen is worse: 30...♕xa5 31 ♕xa5 ♖xa5 32 ♖xb7 and because of the mate threat Black loses his bishop.' (Mednis)

31 ♖xb7! ♕xb7

Geller, believing Black's position to be hopeless, does not make any comment at this point, while Mednis writes: 'No better is 31...♖xa3 32 ♖xc7 ♖a1+ 33 ♗f1 ♗f5 34 f3 and the pawns reach the eighth rank.' However, no win is apparent after 34...h5! 35 ♔f2 ♖a2+: 36 ♔e3 ♖a3+ 37 ♔d2 ♖a2+ 38 ♔c3 ♖c2+! 39 ♔b4 ♖f2!, or 36 ♗e2 g5 37 d6 ♔f8! 38 c5 ♗d3! 39 ♖c8+ ♔g7 40 ♔e3 ♗xe2 41 ♖g8+ (41 d7? ♗b5! with the threat of ...♖e2 mate) 41...♔h7! etc.

And only extraordinary measures – 34 g4!! ♗xg4 35 ♔g2 ♖a3! 36 h3!! ♗xh3+ 37 ♔h2 ♗f5 38 d6 ♔f8 39 c5 f6 (39...♖a4 40 ♖a7!) 40 c6 ♖a4 41 ♖a7 leave White with hopes of a win: 41...♖h4+ 42 ♔g1 ♖g4+ 43 ♗g2 ♖d4 44 ♖a8+ ♔f7 45 ♖d8! Another vivid illustration of the astounding richness of chess!

32 ♕xa5

'The idea conceived in the opening has been carried out in its purest form: the two connected passed pawns in the centre are irresistible. All that is required of White now is accuracy.' (Geller)

32...g6 33 h3 ♕b1+

Having nevertheless got rid of the a5-pawn, Fischer desperately tries to create counterplay with his queen.

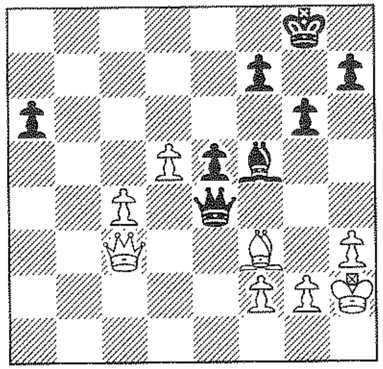
34 ♔h2?

None of the commentators noticed that this natural move effectively throws away the win, and that the simple 34 ♗f1! would have won – after 34...♕b7 35 ♕d8+ ♔g7 36 ♕e7 or 34...♗f5 35 d6 ♗d3 36 d7 Black has no counterplay at all.

34...♗f5

'The alternative is a clearly lost queen and pawn endgame after 34...♕c2 35 ♕d8+ ♔g7 36 ♕xd7 ♕xe2 37 ♕c7 a5! 38 f4!, e.g. 38...a4 39 fxe5 a3 40 e6 a2 41 ♕xf7+ ♔h6 42 ♕f6 etc.' (Rabar, Mednis) But it is much stronger to play 38...♕e3! 39 fxe5 (39 ♕xe5+?? ♕xe5 40 fxe5 a4 41 c5 ♔f8 and wins) 39...♕f4+ 40 ♔g1 ♕c1+ 41 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 42 ♔f3 ♕d3+ with perpetual check. The move in the game is also not so bad!

35 ♕c3 (centralising and supporting the passed c-pawn) **35...♕e4 36 ♗f3**



36...♕d4?

'Loses, as does everything else.' (Mednis) But it was far more tenacious to play 36...♕d3! 37 ♕xd3 (37 ♕c1 e4 is unclear) 37...♗xd3 38 c5 ♔f8 39 d6 ♔e8 (39...e4?! 40 ♗d1 ♗b5 41 ♔g3 a5 42 ♔f4), and after 40 ♗d5 ♔d7 41 ♗xf7 a5 Black would somehow have held on. The correct path is Dvoretsky's suggestion of 40 c6! e4 41 ♗g4! f5 42 ♗d1 ♗b5 (42...♗c4 43 g4! f4 44 g5) 43 c7 ♔d7 44 ♗b3 ♔c8 45 g4! with the decisive inclusion of the king.

37 ♕xd4 exd4 38 g4! (an accurately calculated move) **38...♗c8**

'Black does not achieve anything either by the bishop sacrifice – 38...a5 39 gxf5 a4 40 d6 ♔f8 41 c5, or by 38...♗c2 39 c5 d3 40 c6 ♗a4 41 d6.' (Geller) Or 39...♔f8 40 d6 ♔e8 41 c6 ♔d8 42 ♔g3 g5 43 ♗d5 and wins.

39 c5 a5 40 c6 ♔f8 41 d6 1-0

The sealed move. Black resigned: 41...d3 42 d7, 41...♔e8 42 ♗d1 ♗a6 43 g5! ♗b5 (43...♔d8 44 ♗g4) 44 c7 ♗d7 45 ♗a4, or 41...a4 42 c7 a3 43 ♗c6 a2 44 d7 ♗xd7 45 ♗xd7 a1♕ 46 c8♕+.

In Curaçao Geller achieved his best result in the Candidates events, finishing level with Keres, only half a point behind the winner – Petrosian, who within a year was to win his world championship match against Botvinnik...

However, in the next cycle he did not even reach the Interzonal – so severe and unjust for the Soviet grandmasters was the qualifying system. Korchnoi, the winner of the first cycle in Curaçao, also did not reach the Interzonal, while Bronstein and Stein, although they occupied qualifying places in the 1964 Interzonal, did not end up in the eight Candidates on account of the notorious limit on the participants from one country: the five vacancies allotted by FIDE were already filled by Botvinnik, Keres, Smyslov, Spassky and Tal. And it was only thanks to the fact that Botvinnik opted out of any further competition for the world crown that Geller (as a prize-winner at Curaçao 1962) returned to the Candidates, which in 1965 was held for the first time not as a tournament, but as knock-out matches.

In the quarter-final of 10 games fate paired him with an old opponent – Smyslov! Geller began brilliantly, winning the first and third games with White, with draws in the second and fourth. In a critical situation Smyslov attempted to change the course of the match with Black, by employing his patent variation in the Grünfeld. But Geller met it fully armed.

Game 99

E.Geller-V.Smyslov

Candidates Match,
Moscow 1965, 5th game
Grünfeld Defence D87

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♗e3 ♕c7 11 ♖c1 ♖d8 12 f4

White has managed without the preparatory 12 h3, having guessed that his opponent would avoid 12...♗g4!, 'as Korchnoi played back in 1958 against Spassky.' (Geller)

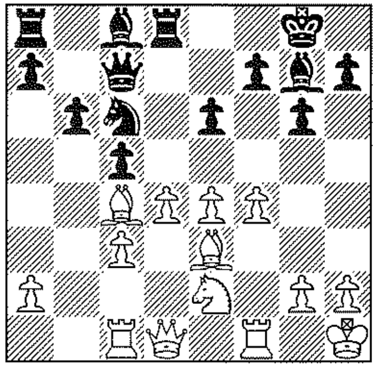
12...e6

'After 12...♗g4 there follows 13 f5, and if 13...gxf5, then 14 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 15 ♕b3+ e6 16 ♘f4 with a strong attack.' (Smyslov) But this sacrifice is dubious on account of 16...♕d7 17 exf5 ♘a5! 18 fxe6+ (18 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 19 ♘xe6 cxd4!) 18...♗xe6 19 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 20 ♘xe6 ♔xe6 21 ♖ce1 ♔d5 22 ♖f5+ ♔c6 (J.Littlewood-Hartston, England 1970). In addition, 13...♘a5! is good.

13 ♔h1! (it is too early for 13 f5 exf5 14 ♗g5 ♖f8 15 exf5 ♗xf5 with equality) **13...b6?!**

It is far better to play 13...♘a5 14 ♗d3 f5! 15 exf5 exf5 (15...gxf5?! 16 ♘g3!) 16 dxc5 ♗e6 (Tukmakov-Stein, Moscow 1971), although, according to Geller, White retains some advantage after 17 ♘d4.

However, Smyslov played by analogy with his famous game with Gligoric (*Game No.91*), but after ♔h1 instead of h2-h3 this proves merely to be a loss of time! Incidentally, Geller had observed that game and came to an interesting conclusion: 'It was immediately apparent to me that Gligoric, on encountering an unfamiliar strategic plan, had acted insufficiently purposefully. Meanwhile, one is struck by the weakening of Black's kingside, and in particular of his f7-pawn.'

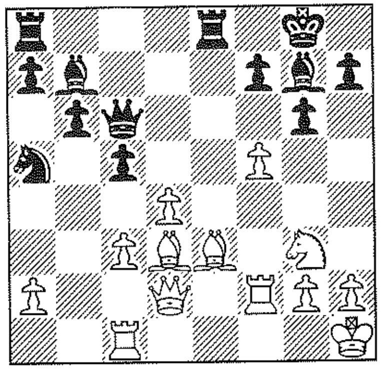


14 f5! (now White gains a powerful attack) **14...♘a5?!**

Strangely enough, Smyslov did not sense the danger. After 14...exf5 Geller states that 'the most effective continuation of the attack is 15 ♗g5 ♖f8 16 d5 ♘e5 17 d6 ♕d7 18 ♗d5 (this is where the weakening of the light-square long diagonal tells) 18...♗b7 19 exf5.'

However, in my opinion 18...♖b8! is stronger and more interesting, in order to sacrifice the exchange after 19 ♗e7 – 19...fxe4 20 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 with definite counterplay. But this is already chess of the new era! Stein, say, would not have hesitated to go in for such abrupt measures, but for Smyslov, with his leaning towards clarity, the play here is perhaps too dynamic.

15 ♗d3 exf5 16 exf5 ♗b7 17 ♕d2! ♖e8 18 ♘g3 ♕c6 19 ♖f2!

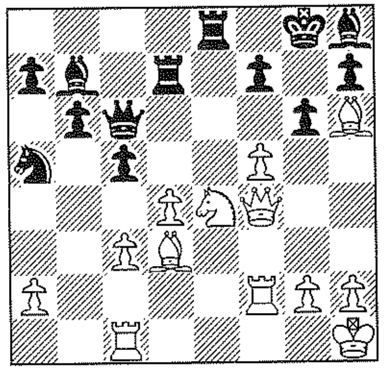


'Simultaneously defending g2 and preparing a decisive offensive against f7.' (Geller) As is apparent, Black underestimated how bad this position was for him.

19...♖ad8

After 19...♖xe3? 20 ♕xe3 cxd4 White wins with the simple 21 cxd4 ♗xd4 22 ♕h6! ♕xc1+ 23 ♕xc1 ♗xf2 24 ♕h6! ♗d4 25 fxg6 hxg6 26 ♗xg6 fxg6 27 ♕xg6+.

20 ♗h6! (an important part of the plan: Black cannot exchange bishops) **20...♗h8 21 ♕f4 ♖d7 22 ♘e4**



Move by move the white pieces steal up on the enemy king.

22...c4?

The decisive mistake: Black deprives himself of counterplay in the centre. That day Smyslov was clearly off-form...

'22...♕c7 was more tenacious, although even then White has an undisputed advantage after 23 ♖e1 ♗xe4 (23...♕xf4 24 ♘f6+) 24 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 25 ♕xe4.' (Geller) In my opinion, 23...♖ee7! is better, but after 24 ♕xc7 (24 fxg6 ♕xf4 25 gxh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♗xf4 ♔g8! is not so clear) 24...♖xc7 25 ♗g5 gxf5 26 ♖xf5 cxd4 27 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 28 cxd4 ♗xd4 29 ♖e2 Black's position is also unenviable.

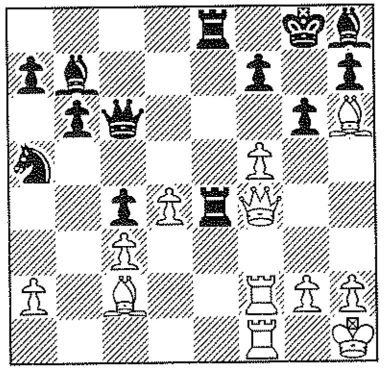
It is possibly stronger to play 23 ♖e2!? ♖ee7 24 ♕h4 with the threat of ♘f6, forcing 24...♗xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 26 ♕xe4 with roughly the same position as the one Geller was aiming for. But here White would at least have had some problems to solve.

23 ♗c2 ♖de7 24 ♖cf1

It is hard to criticise a move that involves a very fine combination. Geller also considered 24 fxg6 hxg6 25 ♗g5?! 'winning the exchange', although after 25...f6! 26 ♗xf6 ♖xe4 27 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 the advantage is with Black. On the other hand, 25 ♖cf1! f5 26 ♘d6 ♖e1 27 ♕g3 is quickly decisive.

24...♖xe4

White had prepared a cascade of four queen sacrifices against this!



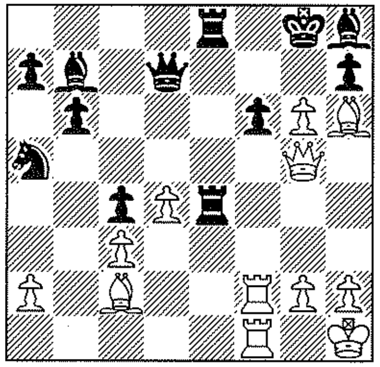
25 fxg6! f6

Black would have lost by force after 25...♕xg6 (25...♖xf4? 26 gxh7 mate) 26 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 28 ♖xf7.

26 ♕g5!!

A brilliant conclusion to the game: this move is not only the most pretty, but also the strongest. 26 ♕g3!? is more prosaic. The machine also considers 26 ♕f5 ♕d5! 27 gxh7+ ♔f7 28 ♕xf6+ ♗xf6 29 ♖xf6+ ♔e7 30 ♖f8 ♔d7! 31 h8♕ ♖4e7! 32 ♗a4+ b5 33 ♗xb5+ ♔c7 34 ♗f4+ ♔b6 35 ♖f6+ ♔xb5 and the advantage is unexpectedly with Black!

26...♕d7 (there is nothing else: 26...♖8e6 27 g7!)



27 ♔g1!

The immediate 27 ♖xf6? is incorrect: 27...♗xf6 28 ♕xf6 hxg6 29 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 30 ♗g5 ♖4e6 etc. However, a good alternative was 27 gxh7+!? ♔xh7 28 ♕h5 ♖8e6 29 ♗xe4+ ♗xe4 30 ♗g5+ ♔g8 31 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 32 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 (32...♗xg2+ 33 ♔xg2 ♕g7+ 34 ♔h1 ♖xf6 35 ♖g1 and wins) 33 ♖xf6 ♘c6 34 ♖f4! ♗h7 35 ♕g5+ ♕g7 36 ♕d5+ with a winning attack.

Geller made a less forcing move, but again the most aesthetic: White simply defends against the mate and Black has no way to save the game.

27...♗g7 28 ♖xf6! ♖g4 (if 28...♗xf6 White now wins by 29 ♕xf6 hxg6 30 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 31 ♗g5 ♖4e6 32 ♗f6+ ♖xf6 33 ♖xf6) **29 gxh7+ ♔h8 30 ♗xg7+ ♕xg7 31 ♕xg4!** (again the prettiest!) **1-0**

Geller confidently won this match: 5½-2½. But in the semi-final he lost by the same score to the irrepressible Spassky, who was also became a stumbling block for him in the 1968 cycle.

Whereas the previous game splendidly illustrates Geller's innate feeling for the initiative and his great attacking mastery, the following (together with the one mentioned in the notes to Black's fifth move) shows that he could also counterattack equally suddenly and sharply.

Game 100
R.Fischer-E.Geller
Skopje 1967, 2nd round
Sicilian Defence B89

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6

'No more experiments with the Najdorf!' (Mednis) A short while earlier, in Monaco 1967, Geller had defeated Fischer with 5...a6 (specially aimed at 6 ♗c4, but...) 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♕b6 8 ♕d2 ♕xb2 9 ♖b1 ♕a3 10 f5 ♘c6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 e5 ♘d5?! 14 ♘xd5 cxd5 15 ♗e2 dxe5 16 0-0 ♗c5+?! 17 ♔h1 ♖f8 18 c4 ♖xf1+ 19 ♖xf1 ♗b7 20 ♗g4? (20 ♕c2! – Tal) 20...dxc4 21 ♗xe6 ♕d3! 22 ♕e1 ♗e4! etc.

6 ♗c4

6 ♗g5 is possibly more dangerous for Black, but the Sozin Attack was Fischer's childhood love. Moreover, he tried the plans with both kingside and queenside castling. In these battles the basis of the modern theory of the variation was laid.

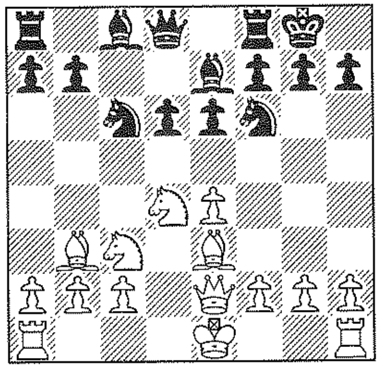
6...e6 7 ♗e3 ♗e7 8 ♗b3

8 ♕e2 0-0 9 0-0-0 leads to the Velimirovic Attack: 9...♘xd4?! 10 ♗xd4 ♕a5 11 e5 dxe5 12 ♗xe5 with the initiative (Velimirovic-Geller, Budapest 1973), but after 9...♕c7 or 9...a6 White usually plays 10 ♗b3 and things reduce to a transposition of moves.

8...0-0 9 ♕e2

The game Fischer-Spassky (Reykjavik 4th

matchgame 1972) went 9 0-0 a6 10 f4, and here Black tried Geller's idea 10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b5 12 a3 (12 e5! is better, as Short played against me in the 14th game of our 1993 match and in Amsterdam 1996) 12...♗b7 13 ♕d3 a5! 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d7 16 ♘xb5 ♘c5 17 ♗xc5 ♗xc5+ 18 ♔h1 ♕g5 with equality. Fischer did not play 6 ♗c4 again...



9...♕a5?!

'Geller's attempt to improve on the customary 9...a6.' (Fischer) 'Black is not obliged to play an early ...a7-a6. After 9...a6 10 0-0-0 ♕a5? (Tal-Bolbochan, Havana Olympiad 1966) 11 ♖hg1! with the idea of g2-g4-g5 he faces difficult problems.' (Geller)

Of course, 10...♕c7! is correct and now after 11 g4 (the other main move is 11 ♖hg1):

1) 11...♘d7 12 g5 (12 ♘f5!?) 12...♘c5 13 h4 (13 ♖g1!?) 13...b5 14 f3? (14 h5!?) 14...♗d7! 15 ♕g2 b4 16 ♘ce2 ♘xb3+ 17 axb3 a5 with excellent play for Black (Fischer-Larsen, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970); after this game, which is analysed in Volume 3, Fischer never again employed the plan with queenside castling;

2) 11...♘xd4 12 ♖xd4! b5 13 g5 ♘d7 (one of the *tabiyas* of the 1970s) 14 ♕h5 ♘e5? 15 f4 ♘c6 16 ♖d3 ♘b4 17 ♖d2 ♖d8 18 f5 g6 19 fxg6 hxg6 20 ♕h4 ♘c6 21 ♕g3 ♘e5 22 h4 ♗b7 23 h5 b4 24 hxg6 ♘xg6 25 ♖dh2 bxc3 26 ♗d4 e5 27 ♖h8+!! ♘xh8 28 g6 (28 ♕h4!) 28...♗f6 29 gxf7+ ♔f8 30 ♖h7! with a fine win (Velimirovic-S.Nikolic, Belgrade 1964).

When I was just starting out in my chess career I looked at this position with the main theoretician in Baku, Alexander Shakarov. He instructed that 14 ♕h5 should be parried by 14...♖d8! I played this against Dvoiris (Vilnius 1975); my opponent did not know this move and after 15 ♘d5?! (15 ♖g1 is correct) 15...exd5 16 ♗xd5 ♘e5! 17 f4 g6 18 ♕h4 ♘f3 19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕xh7+ ♔e8 21 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 he was unable to achieve anything more than perpetual check. But soon, back in Baku, we found 17...♗g4! 18 ♕h4 ♖ac8 19 c3 ♗e6! with some advantage to Black (20 ♗xe6 ♘g6!).

The theory of the Velimirovic Attack developed rapidly to the end of the 20th century, but even now there is no accurate evaluation of the resulting vast complications, and many players simply avoid them.

10 0-0-0 ♘xd4 (10...♗d7?! 11 ♘db5!) **11 ♗xd4**

'11 ♖xd4 ♗d7 12 g4 comes into consideration. With the bishop on d4 this move can be parried by ...e6-e5, whereas now after 12...e5 there is the tempo-gaining 13 ♖a4 or even the exchange sacrifice 13 ♘d5.' (Geller) In my opinion, this sacrifice is incorrect in view of 13...exd4 14 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 15 ♗xd4 ♕g5+ 16 ♔b1 ♗xg4 and it is better to play 13 ♖d2!? ♗xg4 14 f3 ♗e6 15 ♔b1 with an initiative for the pawn.

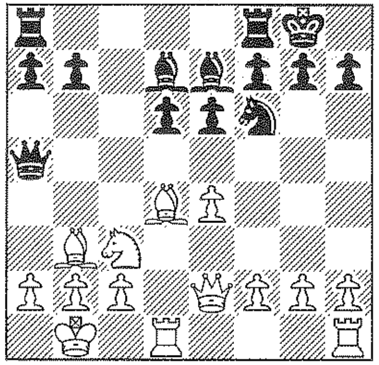
11...♗d7

'At the board I did not even consider the variations with 11...♕g5+? and ...♕xg2. Black's chances are associated with a counterattack on the queenside: ...b7-b5-b4.' (Geller)

12 ♔b1

'A useful prophylactic move, intensifying the threat of 13 ♗xf6. Immediate activity with 12 ♖hg1 would have been highly dubious on account of 12...♖fc8 13 g4 b5 with chances for both sides, or 13...e5 14 ♗e3 ♖xc3 15 ♗d2 ♗b5! 16 ♕e1 ♖xc2+ 17 ♔xc2 ♕a6 with fine counterplay for the exchange.' (Geller)

True, after 18 ♗g5! the chances are with White: 18...♗e2 19 ♖d2 ♗c4 (19...♗f3? 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♕e3 ♕c6+ 22 ♔d3 ♖c8 23 ♖c2 ♕a6+ 24 ♔d2 and wins) 20 ♗xf6 ♖c8 21 ♔b1 ♗xb3 22 axb3 ♗xf6 23 ♕e3 etc. Even so, Fischer's plan with f2-f4-f5 looks stronger and more logical.



12...♗c6?

A critical moment in the opening: this passive move deprives Black of counterplay, and in such dynamic positions the very first mistake often turns out to be the last.

According to Geller, 12...♖fc8 was more thematic, or at least 12...♖ad8 13 ♕e3! and now not 13...b6?! 14 ♗xf6! gxf6? (14...♗xf6! 15 ♖xd6 ♗e5 16 ♖d3 ♗c6 was essential) 15 ♘d5!! with a win for White (Fischer-Sofrevsky, Skopje 1967, 17th round), but 13...♗c6 'with equality, since after 14 ♗xa7 ♘d7 it is not apparent how the bishop at a7 can be freed.' But for the machine everything is apparent: 15 ♗d4! e5?! 16 ♘d5! ♗xd5 17 ♗c3 and wins.

A more intriguing try for Black is 13...b5!? 14 a3 (or 14 ♗xa7 ♖a8) 14...b4 15 axb4 ♕xb4 16 ♗xa7 ♕b7 17 ♕b6! ♕a8 18 f3 ♖c8 with a glimmer of a counterattack on the open files. But I agree with Geller: it was better to play 12...♖fc8! with the intention of ...b7-b5.

13 f4 (in order to press on the e6-pawn by f4-f5) **13...♖ad8**

'If 13...e5 14 ♗e3! ♗xe4 (not 14...♘xe4? 15 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 16 ♗d2 wins) 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♕f3 with advantage.' (Fischer) Although, perhaps, after 16...♘c5!? 17 ♗xc5 (17 ♖d5 exf4) 17...♕xc5 18 ♕xb7 ♗f6 19 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 20 ♗b3 exf4 21 ♕d5 this advantage is not so great.

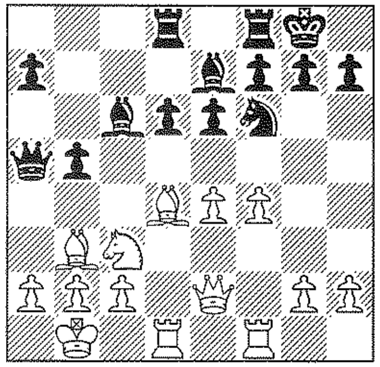
According to Mednis, a more energetic choice was the gambit 13...b5!? 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♖xd6 ♖ac8 16 e5 ♗e7 and 'Black's two bishops give him good counter-chances on the queenside.' However, after 17 ♖d2! ♖fd8 (17...♗b4 18 ♖d3) 18 ♖hd1 a pawn is a pawn.

14 ♖hf1!

Both players also commended 14 g4 and the immediate 14 f5. However, 14 g4?! is weak in view of 14...d5! 15 exd5 (or 15 e5 ♘d7 16 f5 ♗c5! 17 ♕e3 ♗xd4 18 ♖xd4 ♔h8) 15...♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗c3 ♕c5 18 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♖d1 ♕c6 21 f5 ♖d8! with equality, while after 14 f5 Black has 14...exf5 (14...e5?! 15 ♗f2!) 15 exf5 ♖d7! (15...♖fe8?! 16 ♕f2 is inferior) 16 ♖hf1 ♗d8 with a solid defence.

14...b5

14...d5 15 e5 ♘e4 16 f5! or 15...♘d7 16 f5! also favours White.



15 f5!

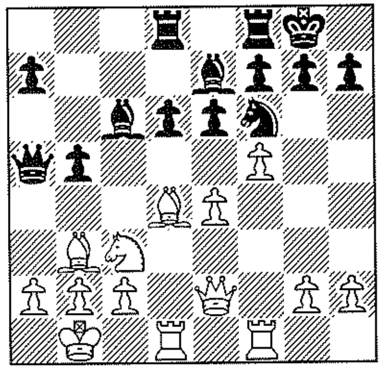
'The die is cast. I didn't want to lose a tempo playing it safe with 15 a3.' (Fischer) Then after 15...b4 16 axb4 ♕xb4 Black would have tried to raise his head, whereas now he has a very difficult position.

For some reason neither Fischer nor Geller has anything to say about another tempting continuation, which they examined in an analysis after the game: 15 e5!? dxe5 16 fxe5 ♘d7 (16...♘d5 17 ♘e4 or 16...♘e8 17 ♘e4 with a strong initiative) 17 ♕g4! I will give some possible variations:

1) 17...b4? 18 ♖xf7!! ♔xf7 19 ♕xe6+ ♔e8 20 ♕xc6 bxc3 21 e6 and wins (Jovcic-Radojcic, Yugoslavia 1969);

2) 17...♕c7 (this is a little better, but...) 18 ♖xf7!! ♔xf7 19 ♗xe6+ ♔e8 20 ♕xg7 b4 (20...♖b8 21 ♗g4) 21 ♗g4! (21 ♕xh7 ♘xe5 22 ♕h5+ ♘f7 23 ♘d5!? ♗xd5 24 ♗xd5 is also dangerous) 21...♖b8 22 e6 bxc3 23 ♗xc3 and the attack more than compensates for the lost material: 23...♖b5 24 exd7+ ♔d8 25 ♖e1 ♕d6 26 ♕xf8+! ♗xf8 27 ♖e8+ ♔c7 28 ♖c8+ and d8♕, or 23...♗d6 24 exd7+ ♗xd7 25 ♗f6! ♖xf6 26 ♗h5+ ♖g6 27 ♗xg6+ hxg6 28 ♖e1+ ♗e6 29 ♖xe6+ ♔d8 30 ♕xg6 etc.;

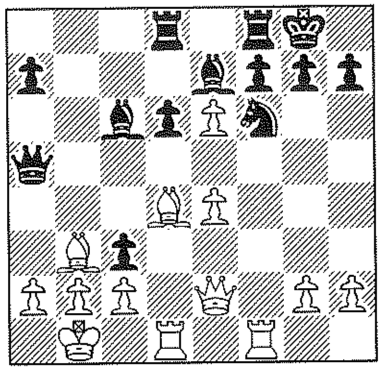
3) 17...♘c5, and 'the piece sacrifice 18 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 19 ♗xe6!? b4 20 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 21 ♕e6 ♗e8 22 ♘e4 is good enough for equal chances, but no more.' (Mednis) But the machine rejects 19...b4? – 20 ♖xd8! ♕xd8 (20...♖xd8? 21 ♖xf7) 21 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 22 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♕c4+ ♔e8 24 ♕xc5 and wins. A more tenacious defensive try is 19...♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♕b4, when White has a choice between an unclear attack after 21 ♕f5 ♗xg2 22 ♗b3 and an endgame with an extra pawn – 21 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 22 ♗d5!



15...b4 (15...exf5? 16 ♖xf5; also bad is 15...e5? 16 ♗e3! with the thematic g2-g4-g5: it is not possible to take on e4 on account of ♗d2) **16 fxe6!**

Fischer has masterfully found the weak points in Black's position. He had in mind this piece sacrifice when he played 14 ♖hf1!

16...bxc3



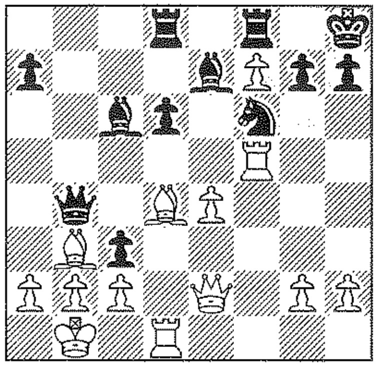
17 exf7+

'Both in the game, and in his notes, Fischer disregards the suggestion by Murey and Boleslavsky of 17 ♖xf6! gxf6 18 exf7+ ♔h8 (18...♖xf7 19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕c4+ and ♕xc6) 19 ♕g4! ♖b8 (19...♗d7 20 ♕h4 ♔g7 21 ♖d3 ♖xf7 22 ♖g3+ ♔f8 23 ♕xh7! *or 21 ♕g3+ ♔h8 22 ♕xd6! – G.K.*) 20 ♕e6 ♕d8 21 ♖f1 ♖b4 22 ♗xc3 ♖xe4 (*22...♖xb3 23 axb3 ♔g7 24 ♖f3 ♖xf7 25 ♖g3+ ♔f8 26 ♗d2! ♔e8 27 ♗h6 – G.K.*) 23 ♖xf6! ♖e1+ 24 ♗xe1! ♗xf6 25 ♗a5!! with a spectacular win (25...♕e7 26 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 27 ♗c3+). A more tenacious alternative is 17...♗xf6, but after 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 e7 White has a clear positional advantage: 19...♕e5 20 exd8♕ ♖xd8 21 ♕c4 ♗e8 22 ♕xc3.' (Geller) Or 21...♗xe4 22 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 23 ♕c7 etc.

Why did Bobby ignore this comparatively less complicated way to win? I think, because here White is temporarily a rook down, and such a major material deficit was psychologically unpleasant for Fischer: he liked to have everything tidily arranged!

17...♔h8 (but not 17...♖xf7? 18 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♕c4+) **18 ♖f5!** (an unexpected attack) **18...♕b4!**

'Reminding White that he too has a vulnerable point – b2. In some cases Black has in mind ...♖xf7.' (Geller) It was much more passive to play 18...♕c7 19 ♖df1! etc.



19 ♕f1!

'A hard move to find – it took around 45 minutes. The threat of 20 ♖xf6 must be attended to.' (Fischer) And if 20...♗xf6 21 ♕xf6! gxf6 22 ♗xf6 mate.

19...♘xe4!

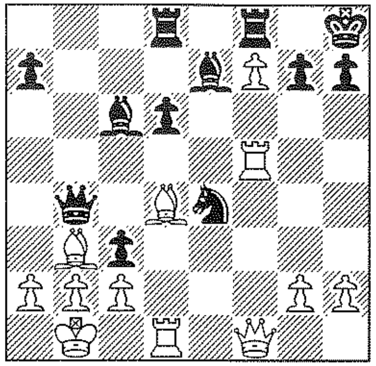
This reply sets White the most difficult problems. '19...♘d7 (on 19...♖xf7?, 20 ♗xc3 wins) loses immediately to 20 ♖h5 ♘e5 21 ♕f5 h6 22 ♕g6!! ♖xf7 (22...♘xg6 allows 23 ♖xh6 mate) 23 ♗xe5 etc.' (Fischer) Or 22...♗xe4 23 ♕xe4 ♖xf7 24 ♕e2 and wins.

However, after 20...♘f6! 21 ♗xf6?! (21 ♖f5!) 21...♗xf6 22 ♕f5 h6 23 ♕g6 ♕xe4 White's attack comes to a standstill (24 ♖xh6+ gxh6 25 ♕xh6+ ♕h7 26 ♕xf6+ ♕g7 27 ♕h4+ ♕h7 with a draw). Therefore after 19...♘d7 the correct move is 20 ♗xc3! ♕b7 (20...♕xe4? 21 ♖e1 ♕h4 22 ♖f4) 21 ♖h5 ♘f6 (21...♘e5 22 ♕f5!; 21...♗xe4 22 ♗d5!) 22 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 23 ♕f5 h6 24 ♕g6 and wins.

Fischer thought that 19...♘g4 was the best defence, but this also runs into 20 ♗xc3 ♕b7 (20...♕xe4? 21 ♖d4) 21 ♖h5!, for example:

1) 21...♘e5 22 ♕f5 h6 23 ♕g6! (Murey); I would add that if 23...♗xe4 White wins very prettily by 24 ♖xh6+ gxh6 25 ♕xh6+ ♗h7 26 ♖xd6!! (yet another sacrifice!) 26...♕e4 27 ♕e6! (again the only move, creating a unique mating construction) 27...♖xd6 28 ♗xe5+ ♕xe5 29 ♕xe5+ ♖f6 30 g4 and wins;

2) 21...♗xe4 22 ♗d5 ♗xc2+ 23 ♔xc2 ♘e3+ 24 ♔b1! (after Murey's move 24 ♔d3 Black can hold on with 24...♘xd5 25 ♕f5 ♕b5+ 26 ♔d2 ♗g5+! 27 ♕xg5 ♘xc3 28 ♕xb5 ♘xb5 29 ♖xb5 ♖xf7 30 ♖e1) 24...♕xd5 25 ♖hxd5 ♘xf1 26 ♖xf1 and wins, or 22...♗xd5 23 ♕f5 h6, and here apart from 24 ♖xd5 ♘f6 25 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 26 ♖xh6+ gxh6 27 ♕xf6+ ♔h7 28 ♖h5 (Murey) White also wins with 24 ♕xg4 ♖xf7 25 ♖hxd5.



20 a3?

White's instinctive desire to drive away the queen turns into a fatal weakening of the b3-square. A couple of hours after the game Fischer discovered a problem-like win by 20 ♕f4!! with the threat of ♖h5:

1) 20...d5? 21 ♕e5 ♘f6 22 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 23 ♕xf6!;

2) 20...♘d2+ 21 ♖xd2 cxd2 22 c3!! ♕c5 (22...♕b7 or 22...♕xb3 – 23 ♗xg7+! ♔xg7 24 ♕g4+ ♔h8 25 ♕d4+ and mates) 23 ♔c2! ♕e5!? (23...♗d7 24 ♗xc5 ♗xf5+ 25 ♕xf5 dxc5 26 ♔d1 ♖d6 27 ♕e5 ♖d7 28 ♕e6 ♖b7 29 ♗c2 and ♕f5, winning) 24 ♖xe5 dxe5 25 ♕xe5 ♗f6 26 ♕c5 (but not 26 ♕xf6?? d1♕+!) 26...♗xd4 27 cxd4 ♖c8 28 ♔xd2 ♗a4 29 ♕e7 ♗xb3 30 axb3 ♖cd8 31 ♔e3 and wins (Geller);

3) 20...cxb2 21 ♖h5! (threatening ♗xg7+) 21...♘c3+ (21...♗f6 22 ♕f5 h6 23 ♖xh6+!! gxh6 24 ♕g6! with mate) 22 ♔xb2 ♘xd1+ (22...♖xf7 23 ♕xf7 ♘xd1+ 24 ♔b1! ♕xd4 25

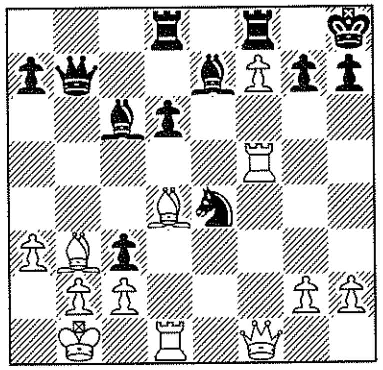
♖xh7+! ♔xh7 26 ♕h5 mate) 23 ♔c1 ♖xf7 24 ♗xf7! ♗d7 (24...♘c3 25 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♕f5+ ♔h6 27 ♕h5 mate) 25 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♕e4+ ♔h8 27 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 28 ♕g6+ and mate next move.

Mednis did not find a win after 21...♘f6!?, but subsequently Murey pointed out 22 ♖h6! (threatening ♖xf6!) 22...d5 23 ♖xf6 ♖d6 24 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 25 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 26 ♖f1, and 26...♗xh2 is not possible on account of 27 ♗c5, whereas the threat of 27 ♖f6! remains. 22...♖xf7 is no better after 23 ♗xf7 ♗e4 24 ♗b3 d5 25 ♗xf6 gxf6 26 ♖xf6 and wins.

'This is the truth, established after many years of painstaking analysis. The number of moves with two exclamation marks demanded of White shows how difficult it was to find all this at the board. A calculation of all the variations was not possible, and intuition in sharp situations was not Fischer's strongest weapon.' (Geller)

I agree that this was not a Fischer position and that he would have felt unsure here. Tal would certainly have found 20 ♕f4!!, but Fischer thought in somewhat different categories, preferring clear plans and some freedom of choice – but here strictly the only moves had to be made!

20...♕b7 (the queen attacks equally well from afar)



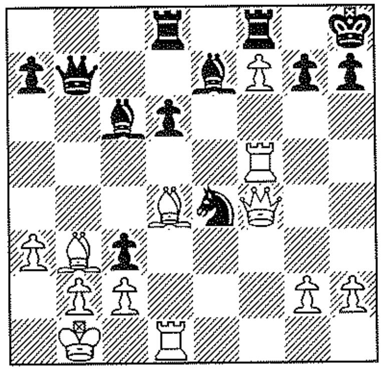
21 ♕f4?

Neither Fischer, nor Geller comments on this move, but Mednis attaches a question mark to it and writes: 'This serious loss of time (one move!) leads to an immediate collapse. The only chance for a draw was again 21 ♖h5!, threatening perpetual check after ♖xh7+ *(21...♘d2+ 22 ♖xd2 cxd2 23 ♖xb7+! – G.K.)*. Black's only winning method then is 21...♘g5! 22 ♕f5 ♖xf7! 23 ♖xg5 ♕xb3!! 24 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 25 cxb3 ♖xg5...'

But after 22 h4! the win is not so clear: 22...♖xf7 (22...♘xf7? 23 ♕f5 h6 24 ♕g6!) 23 ♖xg5 ♖df8 (23...♗xg5 24 ♕xf7) 24 ♖g3 with counter-threats and equal material.

The machine also 'looks' at 21...♕c8 and 21...♕d7, but neither promises Black a win: 21...♕c8 22 ♗xg7+ (22 ♕e2 ♗g5!) 22...♔xg7 23 ♕f4 d5 24 ♕h6+ ♔xf7 25 ♕xh7+ ♔e8 26 ♕g6+ ♖f7 (26...♔d7 27 ♕xe4) 27 ♕g8+ ♗f8 (27...♖f8 28 ♕g6+) 28 ♖e5+ ♖e7 29 ♕g6+ ♔d7 30 ♕xe4 with the initiative, or 21...♕d7 22 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♕f4 d5 24 ♕h6+ ♔xf7 25 ♕xh7+ ♔e8 26 ♕g6+ ♖f7 27 ♕g8+ ♗f8 28 ♖e5+ ♕e7 29 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 30 ♖e1 ♖f6 with very sharp play.

So in all probability, 21 ♕f4? was the decisive mistake in this mind-boggling game.



21...♗a4!!

'I didn't see it! Moreover, the strength of this resource didn't become fully apparent to me for another two moves.' (Fischer)

22 ♕g4

Or 22 ♕h6 ♗f6 23 ♖xf6 ♗xb3! 24 cxb3 (24 ♖xd6 ♗a2+! and ...♕xb2 mate) 24...♕xb3 25 ♖f2 ♕xd1+ and ...♕xd4.

22...♗f6! 23 ♖xf6 ♗xb3! 0-1

24 ♖f4 ♗a2+! and ♕xb2 mate, while if 24 cxb3, then simply 24...♘xf6. 'It is not enough to be a good player, observed Dr. Tarrasch; you must also play well.' (Fischer)

As we have seen, Fischer was vulnerable in very sharp positions, where very concrete play, move by move, was demanded. His eyes became dazzled and he was not always able to find the correct way to develop his initiative at the board.

The autumn of 1975 was very successful for Efim Petrovich, when he won two major tournaments in succession, in both of which he was undefeated: in Teesside: (1. Geller – 9½ out of 14; 2. Smyslov – 8½; 3-5. Bronstein, Hort and Hübner – 8) and the Alekhine Memorial Tournament in Moscow (1. Geller – 10½ out of 15; 2. Spassky – 10; 3-5. Kholmov, Korchnoi and Vaganian – 9½; 6-7. Hort and Petrosian – 9; 8-9. Beliavsky and Tal – 8½).

You can only imagine the class of a player who, within the space one and a half months, was capable of finishing ahead of all the active ex- and vice-world champions, and also of defeating Spassky, Korchnoi and Tal in individual games!

Game 101
E.Geller-M.Tal
Alekhine Memorial Tournament,
Moscow 1975
Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence B08

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♗e2

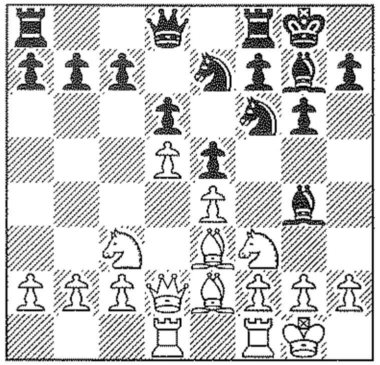
Geller's favourite set-up (and, following his example, also that of the young Karpov, as was the plan with 6 ♗e2 against the Sicilian Defence). Although an extremely active and sharp player, he was nevertheless inclined towards a fundamental handling of the opening and thought in deep positional categories.

5...0-0 6 0-0 ♗g4

Over the years this plan of piece pressure on the centre has become rather more popular even than the traditional 6...c6.

7 ♗e3 ♘c6 8 ♕d2 e5 9 d5 ♘e7 10 ♖ad1

The main continuation, hindering ...c7-c6. If 10 a4, then 10...♗d7! is even better (Geller-Vasyukov, Kislovodsk 1968).



10...♗d7

A sound reply, which is superior to 10...♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♘d7 12 ♗e2!, 10...♘d7 11 ♘g5 ♗xe2 12 ♘xe2 h6 13 ♘h3 (Spassky-Parma, Havana Olympiad 1966), or 10...♘e8 11 ♘e1 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 f5 13 f4! exf4 14 ♗xf4 h6 15 ♗c1 ♘f6 16 ♘d3 ♘h5 17 e5 with the initiative (Geller-Savon, Riga 1975). And after 10...♔h8 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘d7 13 ♗e2 f5 14 f4! Karpov efficiently defeated Keene (Moscow 1977) and Smejkal (Leningrad 1977).

10...b5!? is far more interesting. In the winter of 1979-80 I suggested this move to Adorjan before his Candidates match with Hübner, and 10...b5 then occurred in the well-known game Karpov-Azmaiparashvili (50th USSR Championship, Moscow 1983): 11 a3 a5 (11...♗d7!?) 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♖a3! 14 ♗g5 ♖xc3 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♖a3 with equality. White did not risk going in for 11 ♗xb5!? or 12 ♗xb5!? ♗xf3 13 gxf3 ♘h5!, although after 14 ♔h1! it is not clear whether Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

11 ♘e1

Geller's idea. Again if 11 h3 Black has 11...b5!? 12 b4 a5 13 a3 (Karpov-Timman, Amsterdam 1976) 13...axb4 14 axb4 ♖a3!?

11...♘g4

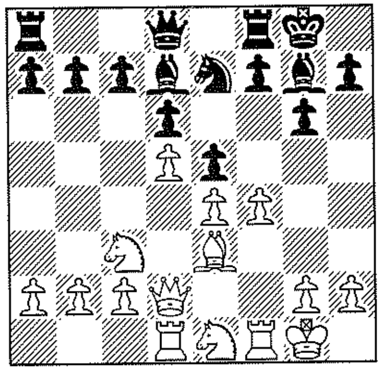
In my opinion, 11...b5!? offers greater promise of counterplay – after all, the white pieces are not ideally placed for the moment. For example: 12 a3 a5 13 b4 axb4 14 axb4 ♖a3 15 f3 ♕b8 16 ♘d3 c6! (Thorsteins-Kasparov, Saint John blitz 1988).

12 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 13 f3 ♗d7

Black's idea is obvious: since the white pawn is at c2 and the usual 'anti-King's Indian' play with c4-c5 is clearly too slow, the possibility of ...f7-f5-f4, ...g6-g5 etc. suggests itself, with a strong attack.

14 f4!

An excellent novelty; previously 14 ♗h6 had been tried. White unexpectedly initiates play in the centre, having subtly observed that it is not easy for the 'bad' knight at e7 to reach e5, and that its activation with the help of ...f7-f5 will create a weak square in Black's position at e6.



14...exf4?

Later Tal himself recommended 14...♗g4! and this turned out to be the best defence:

1) 15 ♘f3 f5 (15...exf4!? 16 ♗xf4 f5 Karpov-Nunn, Hamburg 1982) 16 ♖de1 ♗xf3 17 ♖xf3 ♕d7 18 fxe5 dxe5 (Geller-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1977), or 16 fxe5 dxe5 17 h3 ♗xf3 18 ♖xf3 ♘c8 19 exf5 gxf5 20 ♗h6 ♘d6 (Geller-Thipsay, New Delhi 1987), in both cases with equality;

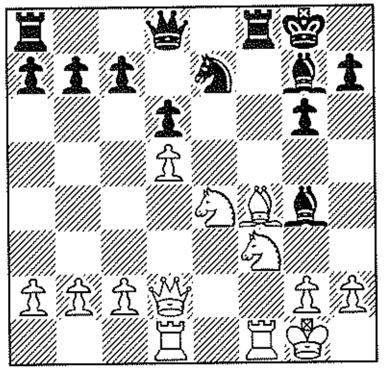
2) 15 ♖b1 c6! 16 h3 ♗d7 17 fxe5 (17 dxc6?! ♗xc6 18 ♖d1 exf4 19 ♖xf4 f5! Karpov-Adorjan, Las Palmas 1977) 17...dxe5 18 d6 (18 ♗c5!?) 18...♘c8 19 ♖d1 ♘b6 20 b3 ♗e6 with a complicated game (Karpov-Timman, Tilburg 1977).

15 ♗xf4 f5

A weakening, but the attempt to solve the problem of the knight by 15...♔h8 16 ♘f3 ♘g8 would have run into 17 e5!

16 ♘f3 (White begins stealing up on the e6-square with his knights, methodically increasing his advantage) **16...fxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♗g4**

17...♗xb2?! is dangerous in view of 18 c3 ♗a3 19 ♗g5!



18 ♖de1 ♕d7 19 ♘eg5 ♖ae8 20 c4 ♘c8 21 ♘d4 ♖xe1 22 ♖xe1 ♖e8 23 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 24 h3! ♗d7

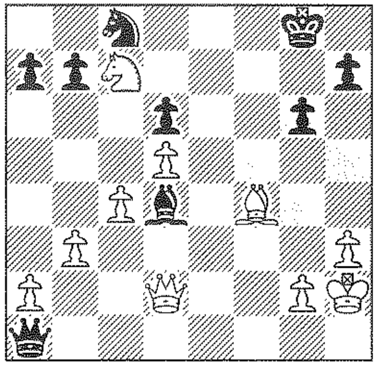
After 24...♗xd4+ 25 ♕xd4 ♗f5 White has the powerful 26 ♘e6! ♗xe6 27 ♗h6 ♕e7 28 dxe6 (Tal) and then, perhaps, g2-g4-g5 and ♕f6!, stalemating Black, whose position is chronically difficult: the e6-square is 'coming apart at the seams' and the c8-knight is out of play.

25 ♘de6 ♗xe6 26 ♘xe6 (the triumph of Geller's strategy: the knight at e6 against the knight at c8!) **26...♕f7 27 b3 ♕f6?!**

If 27...c6 White can reply 28 ♗g3 or go into a queen endgame with an extra pawn: 28 dxc6 bxc6 29 ♘xg7 ♕xg7 30 ♗xd6 ♘xd6 31 ♕xd6 ♕a1+ 32 ♔h2 ♕xa2 33 ♕xc6 ♕xb3 34 ♕a8+ ♔g7 35 ♕xa7+ etc.

28 ♘xc7 ♕a1+ 29 ♔h2 ♗d4

A desperate attempt to complicate the play with a time scramble imminent.



30 ♕e2?

White could have won by 30 ♕c1! ♕xa2 (30...♕xc1 31 ♗xc1 is hopeless) 31 ♕e1! with a mating attack. The move in the game also appears to win, but...

30...♘e7!

A brilliant, purely Tal-like reply. The picture changes abruptly: the black knight, which for a long time has been dozing, suddenly joins the counterattack.

31 ♘b5

It transpires that after 31 ♕e6+ ♔h8 32 ♕xe7? ♕g1+ 33 ♔g3 ♕f2+ 34 ♔g4 ♕xg2+ 35 ♗g3 h5+ 36 ♔h4? (36 ♔f4 ♗e5+ 37 ♔e3 ♕xg3+ also holds little joy) Black – in the style of Tal! – creates a spectacular mating construction: 36...♕e4+!! 37 ♕xe4 ♗f6 mate! It was probably this that Geller had missed.

31...♗g1+

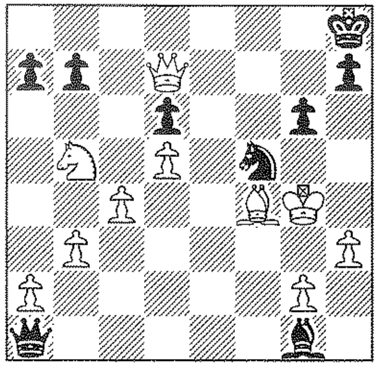
Tal gave this move a question mark and suggested 31...♕g1+!? 32 ♔g3 ♘f5+ 33 ♔f3 ♗f6 'with an unclear game.' In my opinion, White cannot avoid a draw here: 34 ♗g3 a6 35 ♗f2 ♕b1 36 ♕e6+ ♔g7 37 g4 ♘h4+ 38 ♗xh4 ♗xh4 39 ♘xd6 ♕f1+ 40 ♔e4 ♕e2+ 41 ♔d4 ♕d2+ etc. Black can also play 33...♗c5 34 ♔g4 ♔g7 (but not 34...h5+? 35 ♔g5 ♔h7 36 ♘xd6) 35 ♕b2+ ♔f7 36 ♕e2 ♔g7 with a draw. However, the bishop check does not yet lose!

32 ♔g3 ♘f5+ 33 ♔f3 ♘h4+?

According to Tal, Black could no longer save the game, but in fact after 33...♗b6! White would have had to force a draw: 34 ♕e8+ ♔g7 35 ♕d7+ ♔f6 36 ♕e6+ ♔g7.

In the time scramble Tal was relying on counterplay with checks, but Geller instantly saw that the white king could boldly advance, since it can hide from the checks deep in the opponent's rear.

34 ♔g4 ♘f5 35 ♕e8+ ♔g7 36 ♕d7+ ♔h8



37 ♘xd6! ♕d1+ 38 ♔g5 ♕h5+ 39 ♔f6 ♗d4+ 40 ♔e6 ♘g7+ 41 ♔f7 g5+ 1-0

Black resigned, without waiting for 42 ♔f8. A very fine king march! Despite the time-trouble error, this game was an excellent achievement by Geller.

Late in 1976 the new world champion competed for the first time in this capacity in a USSR Championship, and he emerged the winner, suffering only one defeat in his 17 games. But what a defeat! Against Geller he risked playing the French Defence for the first time in his life...

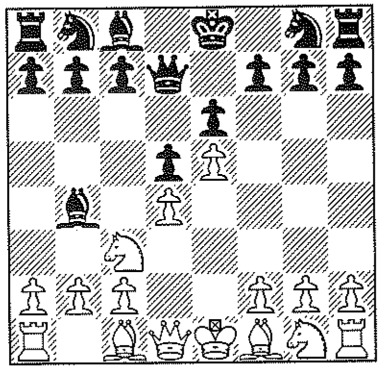
Game 102
E.Geller-A.Karpov
USSR Championship,
Moscow 1976, 3rd round
French Defence C16

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3

Possibly Karpov was hoping for 3 ♘d2,

which Geller had played in 35 of his previous 42 'French' games, and which he also played in the ninth round against Vaganian.

3...♗b4 (later the 12th world champion replied exclusively with 3...dxe4) **4 e5 ♕d7**



A rare plan, which has been employed, sometimes beginning with 4...b6, by Petrosian, Bronstein, Gulko, Vaganian and Timman. The main line is 4...c5 (*Games Nos.105 and 127*, and also *Volume 1 Game No.136*).

5 ♘f3 (the same leaning towards a solid handling of the opening: Geller is not tempted by the sharp 5 ♕g4) **5...b6 6 ♗d2!?**

A well-tried weapon. 6 ♗d3 is also good.

6...♗a6

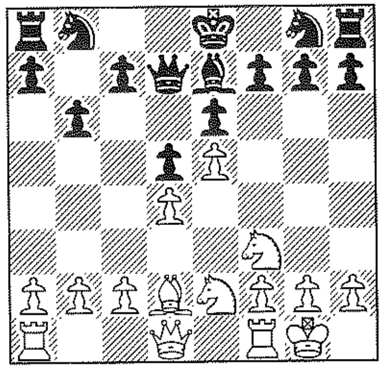
The old game Geller-Petrosian (Moscow 1963) went 6...♗f8 7 a4!? (a more modest idea is 7 ♗e2 ♗a6 8 0-0 c5! Timman-Petrosian, Tilburg 1981) 7...♘c6?! (7...♗a6; 7...a5!?) 8 ♗e2 ♘ge7 9 0-0 f6?! 10 ♖e1 fxe5? 11 ♗b5! ♘g6 (there is nothing better) 12 ♘xe5 ♘gxe5 13 ♖xe5 a6 (13...♗e7 14 ♕f3! ♗d6 15 ♘xd5) 14 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 15 ♘xd5 ♗d7 16 ♗g5 ♗d6 17 ♕h5+! ♔f8 (17...g6 18 ♕e2) 18 ♕f3+ ♔g8 19 ♖xe6 and White won.

7 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 8 0-0

Also possible is the immediate 8 ♘e2 (Liberzon) or 8 ♕e2 ♘b8 9 ♘d1!? with the idea of ♘e3 and c2-c4 (Timman).

8...♘b8 (in Geller's opinion, 8...♗xc3!? 9 ♗xc3 ♘e7 is not so clear) **9 ♘e2! ♗e7?**

This very strange move is the origin of Black's defeat. An experienced 'Frenchman' would have preferred 9...♗xd2 10 ♕xd2 ♘e7 or 9...♗f8 (so that the knight could come out to e7) with merely a somewhat inferior position.



10 ♖c1!

Preparing c2-c4. It is already hard to offer Black any good advice: it is not clear how he can overcome his backward development.

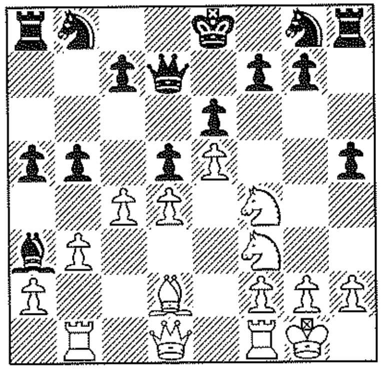
10...b5

This attempt to restrain White's offensive merely leads to the opening of the queenside.

11 ♘f4! h5 (if 11...♘h6, then 12 ♘h5 ♘f5 13 g4) **12 b3**

According to Geller, 12 a4!? a6 (12...bxa4 13 c4!) 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖a1 etc. was also promising.

12...♗a3 13 ♖b1 a5? (of course, not 13...♘e7? 14 b4, but the bishop should have been retreated) **14 c4!**



14...c6

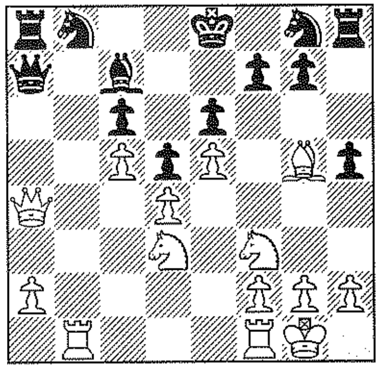
The exchanges 14...bxc4 15 bxc4 dxc4 would have allowed the decisive breakthrough 16 d5! exd5 17 e6.

15 c5 ♗b4 16 ♗c1! a4 (a pawn has to be given up in order to save the bishop) **17 ♘d3**

17 a3!? ♗a5 18 bxa4 bxa4 19 ♕xa4 ♕a7 20 ♗d2 ♗c7 21 ♖xb8+ ♕xb8 22 ♕xc6+ ♔f8 23 ♘g5 would also have won (Geller).

17...♗a5 18 bxa4 bxa4 19 ♕xa4 ♕a7 20 ♗g5 ♗c7

In the event of 20...♕a6 21 ♖b3 ♘e7 22 ♖fb1 ♘d7 23 ♖a3 Black's position is also completely hopeless.



21 ♖xb8+!?

A spectacular exchange sacrifice in the style of the old masters! Geller does not miss an opportunity to play to the gallery, paying homage to his romantic youth. I think that already here he must have seen the rare mating construction that occurred in the game.

However, there was hardly any immediate need for this sacrifice: after the prosaic 21 ♕b3 White would have remained a pawn up with an overwhelming positional advantage (21...♕xa2 22 ♕xa2 ♖xa2 23 ♖b7 and ♖fb1 is bad for Black). But that would have been a different game...

21...♕xb8 (21...♗xb8? 22 ♕xc6+) **22 ♕xc6+ ♔f8 23 ♘f4** (the knight is eyeing the e6- and g6-squares) **23...♖a7?**

A psychologically understandable move: Black is aiming for the exchange of queens. Both 23...♖xa2? 24 ♘h4 ♕e8 25 ♕xc7 and 23...♘e7? 24 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 25 ♘g5 (Geller) or 24 ♘xe6+ fxe6 25 ♕xe6 ♕e8 26 ♘h4 (Hartston) were bad.

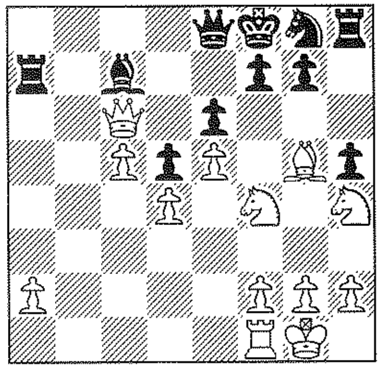
However, in my opinion, Black's only chance was 23...♗d8!, a move not mentioned by anyone else. At any event, here there does not appear to be any forced win:

1) 24 ♗xd8 ♕xd8 25 ♘g5 ♖h6 26 ♘fxe6+ fxe6 27 ♘xe6+ ♖xe6 28 ♕xe6 ♘e7 29 f4 ♕c8! or 26 h4 ♘e7 27 ♕d6 ♕b8! 28 g3 ♕b7 29 ♖e1 ♔g8, and although White has the advantage, the win is still a long way off;

2) 24 ♘h4 ♖h6! (but not 24...♗xg5? because of the fine 25 ♘hg6+! fxg6 26 ♘xe6+ ♔e7 27 ♘xg5 ♘h6 28 ♕xg6 and wins) 25 ♗xh6 ♗xh4 26 g3 ♗e7 27 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 28 ♘xh5+ ♔h8 29 a4 and White has four pawns for the piece, but the computer's evaluation of his advantage is rather modest.

24 ♘h4! (it was for the sake of this that Geller sacrificed the exchange!) **24...♕e8**

24...♘e7 is hopeless after 25 ♘xe6+! fxe6 26 ♕xe6 ♗d8 27 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 28 ♘g6+ ♔e8 29 ♕c6+ ♔d8 30 ♘xh8 with a crushing win.

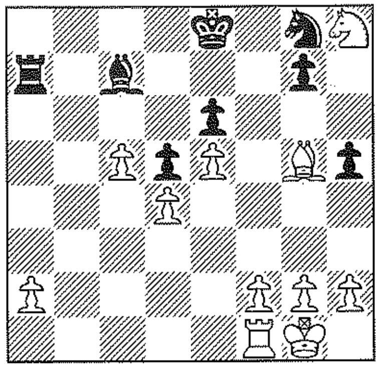


25 ♕xe6!!

A brilliant combination – it is not often that world champions are defeated in such style!

25...fxe6 26 ♘hg6+ ♕xg6 (the queen has to be returned: 26...♔f7? 27 ♘xh8+ ♔f8 28 ♘fg6+) **27 ♘xg6+ ♔e8 28 ♘xh8**

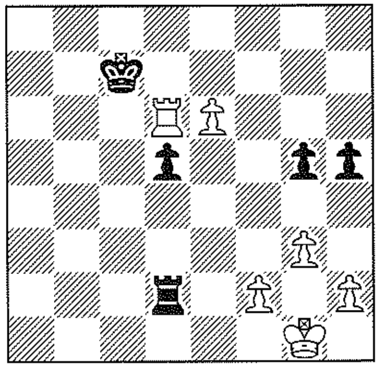
White now has so many extra pawns that their conversion does not present a serious problem.



28...♖a4 29 ♖d1 ♘e7 30 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 31 ♘g6+ ♔f7 32 ♘f4

32 ♘h4!? was equally good: 32...♗xe5 33 ♘f3 ♗f6 34 h4 ♖xa2 35 ♔f1 and wins (Geller).

32...♗xe5 33 dxe5 ♖xf4 34 ♖c1! ♔e8 35 c6 ♔d8 36 c7+ ♔c8 37 g3 ♖a4 (or 37...♖f5 38 f4 g5 39 a4! gxf4 40 a5 fxg3 41 a6! gxh2+ 42 ♔h1 ♖f2 43 ♖a1 and wins) **38 ♖c6 ♖xa2 39 ♖xe6 g5 40 ♖d6 ♖d2 41 e6 ♔xc7**



42 e7 1-0

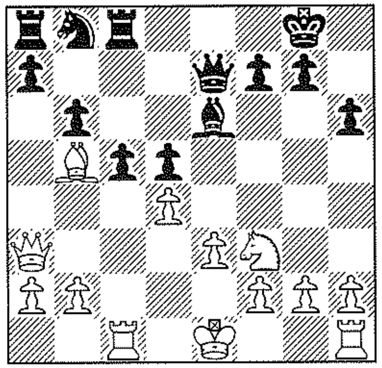
If 42...♖e2 43 ♖xd5 ♖xe7 44 ♖xg5 and wins.

A reminder of Geller's great practical strength was given at the end of the 1970s, when in front of my own eyes he brilliantly won the 47th USSR Championship (Minsk 1979) at the age of 54(!): 1. Geller – 11½ out of 17 (undefeated); 2. Yusupov – 10½; 3-4. Balashov and Kasparov – 10 etc. It was apparent that he was superior to his opponents in the identifying strategic plans, and that he thought in these plans, but his tactical skill was as sharp as a razor.

For many years Geller also worked as a trainer, and at various times he helped Botvinnik, Spassky, Petrosian and Karpov in matches, generously sharing his ideas and researches with them. Here are a few striking examples.

Queen's Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 (Geller's second favourite opening after the King's Indian) **3 ♘c3 ♗e7 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 b6 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♘xd5 exd5 11 ♖c1 ♗e6 12 ♕a4 c5 13 ♕a3 ♖c8 14 ♗b5**



14...♕b7!

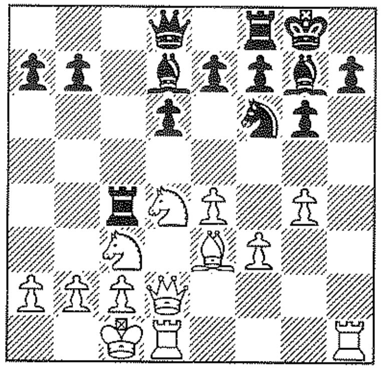
A novelty stored up for Fischer, but for some reason in the sixth game of the Reykjavik match Spassky played 14...a6 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 0-0 ♖a7?! (16...♕b7) 17 ♗e2 ♘d7 and after 18 ♘d4! ♕f8?! (18...♘f6) 19 ♘xe6! fxe6 20 e4! he lost.

15 dxc5 bxc5 16 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 17 ♕xc5 ♘a6! 18 ♗xa6 (18 ♕c6 ♕xc6 19 ♗xc6 ♖b8) **18...♕xa6** and White could not cope with the resulting problems (Timman-Geller, Hilversum 1973).

Sicilian Defence, Dragon Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6

Here Geller used to employ the Rauzer Attack – **6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♕d2 ♘c6 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 ♗b3 ♖c8 11 h4 ♘e5 12 h5 ♘xh5 13 0-0-0 ♘c4 14 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 15 g4 ♘f6**



In the fourth game of his match with Korchnoi (Moscow 1971) he tried **16 ♗h6 ♘xe4 17 ♕e3 ♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♘f6 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♖h2** (but after 20...♕c7! 21 ♕xe7 ♕xc3 22 ♕xd6 ♖c8 Black could have defended), and against Ivkov (Amsterdam 1974) – **16 ♘d5.**

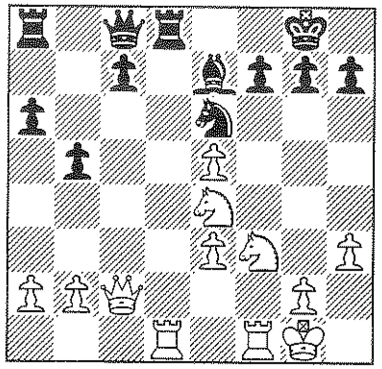
But soon afterwards in the Karpov-Korchnoi match (Moscow 2nd matchgame 1974) there occurred **16 ♘de2! ♕a5 17 ♗h6 ♗xh6 18 ♕xh6 ♖fc8 19 ♖d3! ♖4c5? 20 g5! ♖xg5 21 ♖d5! ♖xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♖e8 23 ♘ef4 ♗c6 24 e5!** with a spectacular rout.

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4

After 5...♗e7 6 ♖e1 model examples of play for White are provided by his wins over Portisch (Moscow 1967), Gligoric (Belgrade 1970), Mecking (Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970) and Keres (41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973).

6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 ♘bd2 ♘c5 10 c3 d4 11 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 12 cxd4 ♘cxd4 13 ♘e4! (the 'novelty of the year' from the Karpov-Korchnoi match, Merano 1981) **13...♗e7 14 ♗e3 ♘f5** (but not 14...♘xf3+?! 14 ♕xf3 0-0 15 ♖fd1 ♕e8? 16 ♘f6+!, as in the 14th matchgame) **15 ♕c2 0-0 16 ♖ad1!?** (or 16 ♘eg5 ♗xg5 with equality, as in the 16th matchgame) **16...♘xe3 17 fxe3 ♕c8 18 h3!? ♖d8**



19 ♘h2!? (a further improvement) **19...♖xd1 20 ♕xd1 ♘c5** (20...♕e8!?) **21 ♕f3 ♕e8 22 ♘g3 ♖d8 23 ♘g4 ♘e6 24 ♘f5 ♔h8 25 ♘xe7?!** (25 h4!) **25...♕xe7 26 ♕xf7 ♕xf7 27 ♖xf7 h5 28 ♘f2 ♖d5 29 ♖f5 g6?** (29...♖d2! 30 ♖f7 ♖d5 with equality) **30 e4!** and White went on to win (Geller-Tal, Sochi 1986).

'Petrovich', as his friends affectionately called him, also helped me before my world championship match with Short (London 1993). I asked him to give a number of opening recommendations. He expressed some ideas in the Slav Defence, but the main thing was that, being an expert on the Marshall Attack which Short used to employ – **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d5**, he offered a couple of pieces of advice on how to advantageously avoid this sharp variation: **8 a4 ♗b7 9 d3 d6 10 ♘bd2!** (instead of the usual 10 ♘c3) followed by ♘f1, or **8 h3 ♗b7 9 d3 d6 10 a3!?** and ♘c3. In so doing he showed two or three possible variations: here this idea is possible, there – another one...

The variations were raw, but Geller's deep approach very much appealed to me: he believed in 8 a4 and ♘bd2. The most surprising thing is that in this way I scored three wins out of three and effectively won the match, although my entire preparation was largely based on Geller's conviction, which he expressed simply: 'You should play ♘bd2!' But the subtleties of this scheme were something that I had to examine during the course of the match. Indeed, from c3 the knight all the same has to move (after ...b5-b4) to e2 and then to g3, whereas after ♘b1-d2-f1 it may go either to g3, or to e3. In addition, at f1 the knight does not impede White as it does at e2, and there is the useful developing move ♗d2! Later experience confirmed the correctness of Geller's strategy – among others I can quote my games with Leko (Linares 2001), Tkachiev (Cannes rapidplay 2001) and Vladimirov (Batumi rapidplay 2001).

8 h3 ♗b7 9 d3 d6 10 a3 also became popular, after I gained an advantage in this variation against Kamsky (Dos Hermanas 1996). This had also been played before, but it was Geller who gave it the OK, saying: 'I think this is also possible.' He was one of the last titans, who thought in such general positional categories. His brain was tirelessly seeking the optimal schemes from as long ago as the early 1950s, when chess theory was virgin territory and an enormous scope remained for strategic thinking, in contrast to the present-day computer era of universal knowledge and concrete calculation.

In 1991 Efim Petrovich battled with Smyslov in the first world senior championship (for players aged 60 and over) and only conceded first place on the tie-break. But in the 1992 championship Geller had no equals!

Battle of the Heavyweights No.2

Let us return, however, to the middle of the century and analyse a further two important games of Smyslov, which did much to anticipate his triumphs in the 1953 and 1956 Candidates tournaments.

The first of them was with Keres, in the 24th round of the Zürich marathon (I will remind you: this was a double-cycle tournament with 15 participants). Paul Petrovich, along with Bronstein and Smyslov, was regarded as one of the main favourites (he had already won the USSR Championship three times and led the Soviet team at the 1952 Olympiad). Before this meeting the leading positions were as follows: Reshevsky and Smyslov – 13½ points, Bronstein and Keres – 13, and moreover, in the final round the latter received a bye.

'It was in this psychological situation that Keres conceived the idea of suddenly changing his tournament fortune with an unusual attack on the king with two rooks, without the aid of pawns,' writes Bronstein in his remarkable book on the tournament. 'Keres was unable or did not want to force himself methodically and consistently to prepare an attack. As early as the 19th move he offered a rook sacrifice, as they say, for nothing.' But Smyslov figured everything out and the spectacular assault came to nothing.

Game 103

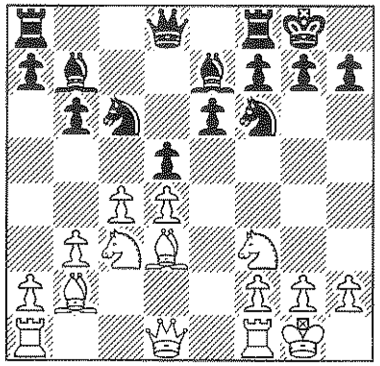
P.Keres-V.Smyslov

Candidates Tournament,
Zürich 1953, 24th round
Queen's Indian Defence E14

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 e3 ♗e7 5 b3 0-0 6 ♗b2 b6

'This development plan promises more interesting play than the variation 6...d5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 9 ♗c4, where there is an early tendency towards simplification.' (Smyslov) 8...exd5 9 d4 ♘c6 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 a3 a5 12 ♗e2 ♕d6 13 0-0 ♖d8 with equality is also played.

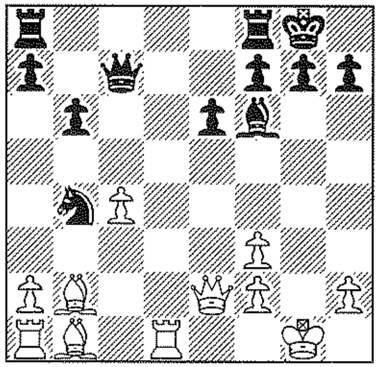
7 d4 cxd4 8 exd4 d5 9 ♗d3 ♘c6 10 0-0 ♗b7



11 ♖c1

White has played the opening unpretentiously, although it must be said that Keres had a subtle feeling for such set-ups and gained a number of good wins in them – for example, against Taimanov (Tallinn 1975).

Modern theory considers 11 ♕e2!? to be more accurate, for example: 11...♘b4 (but not 11...dxc4 12 bxc4 ♘xd4? 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 14 ♘d5 ♕c5 15 ♗xf6! gxf6 16 ♕g4+ ♔h8 17 ♕h4 and wins) 12 ♗b1 dxc4 13 bxc4 ♗xf3 14 gxf3! ♕xd4?! (Polugayevsky recommended 14...♘h5 with a slightly inferior position after 15 a3 ♘a6 16 ♖d1) 15 ♘e4! ♕d8 16 ♖d1 ♕c7 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 (17...gxf6?! 18 ♔h1!).



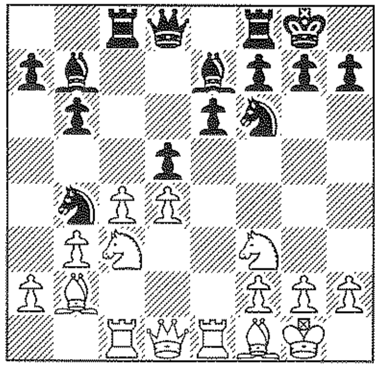
Analysis diagram

In the game K.Grigorian-Karpov (44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976) White suddenly played 18 ♗xf6? gxf6 19 ♗xh7+ and after 19...♔g7! 20 ♖d4 ♖h8 21 ♖g4+ ♔f8 22 ♕b2 ♖xh7 23 ♕xb4+ ♕c5 24 ♕d2 ♖c8 25 ♖e1 ♕e7 26 ♖d4 (26 ♕d7 ♖c7!) 26...♖h5 he soon resigned, although not long before Bondarevsky had pointed out both this incorrect variation, and the way to gain a clear advantage in the popular magazine *Shakhmatny Byulleten* – 18 ♗xh7+! ♔h8 19 ♗e4 ♗xb2 20 ♕xb2 ♘c6 21 ♕b5 ♘e5 22 f4.

11...♖c8 12 ♖e1

Here 12 ♕e2 is less convincing, since after 12...dxc4 13 bxc4 ♘b4! 14 ♗b1 it is now possible to play 14...♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♕xd4 16 ♘e4 (or 16 ♘d5 ♕c5 17 ♗d4 ♕xd4 18 ♘xe7+ ♔h8) 16...♕d8 17 ♖fd1 ♕c7 18 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6! (but not 18...gxf6?! 19 ♔h1!) 19 ♕e4 ♖fd8 20 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 and Black's chances are even slightly better.

12...♘b4 13 ♗f1



13...♘e4!

These knight leaps, in the words of Smyslov, are 'a typical tactical device, enabling Black to relieve the situation.' Now he should not have any problems.

14 a3 (of course, 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♘d2? f5 16 f3 ♗f6 is unfavourable for White, but 15 ♘e5 is not so clear) **14...♘xc3 15 ♖xc3** (15 ♗xc3? ♘a2) **15...♘c6 16 ♘e5**

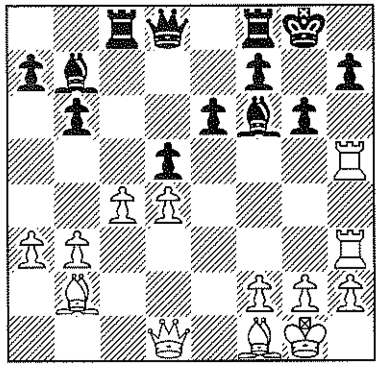
Perhaps it is more logical to continue 16 cxd5 (16 c5 is questionable) 16...♕xd5 17 ♗c4 ♕d6 18 d5 ♘a5 19 ♖d3 ♘xc4 20 bxc4 ♖fd8 also with an unclear game (Lukacs-Atalik, Budapest 1991).

16...♘xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♗f6 18 ♖h5

With the crude threat of 19 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 20 ♕h5+ ♔g8 21 ♖h3 ♗h4 22 ♖xh4 f5 23 ♕h7+, but against Smyslov such tricks do not work.

18...g6 19 ♖ch3!

Leaving the rook en prise. Bronstein rated Keres's idea quite highly, but the originality of an idea is one thing, and the practical result is often something quite different...



19...dxc4!

Played after lengthy thought. As Smyslov later admitted, he very much wanted to take the rook, since he did not see how White could win after 19...gxh5? 20 ♕xh5 ♖e8. For example, 21 ♕h6 dxc4 22 d5 ♗xb2 23 ♖g3+ ♔h8 24 ♖h3 ♔g8 leads to a draw. But the future world champion's intuition did not let him down! Bronstein later suggested 21 a4!! (with the threat of ♗a3) 21...♕d6 (but not 21...dxc4? 22 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 23 ♗a3+ ♖e7 24 ♖g3 and wins) 22 c5 ♕f4! (the best chance, since White is winning after 22...bxc5? 23 ♕h6 ♗xd4 24 ♗xd4 cxd4 25 f4 ♖c3 26 ♗d3, or 22...♕d8? 23 c6! ♖xc6 – 23...♕d6 24 cxb7 ♖b8 25 ♖g3+ ♔f8 26 ♖f3 ♕e7 27 ♗c1 – 24 ♗a3 ♖d6 25 ♕h6 ♗xd4 26 ♗d3; here Burgess in *The World's Greatest Chess Games* adds 25...e5 26 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 27 ♕h6+ ♔e7 28 ♖f3! and wins) 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 24 cxb6 and now after 24...♗xd4 25 ♖f3 ♕xf3 26 ♗a3+ ♗c5 27 ♗xc5+ ♖xc5 28 gxf3 and White retains a practical advantage, while 24...♕d6 is also insufficient after 25 ♖f3 ♔e7 26 ♕h6 ♗h8 (after Burgess's move 26...e5?, the most elegant is 27 dxe5 ♗xe5 28 ♕h4+ ♕f8 29 ♕h5! ♗xh2+ 30 ♔h1 ♗f4 31 ♗a3! ♕xa3 32 ♖xf4 and wins) 27 ♕h4+ f6 28 ♕h7+ ♔d8 29 ♕xb7 ♖e7 30 ♕a6 ♕xb6 31 ♖h3 or 31 ♗a3. However, Black can successfully repel the attack by 24...axb6! 25 ♗a3+ ♖e7 26 ♖g3 ♔e8 27 ♗b5+ ♗c6!

But now Deep Junior joins the battle with 22 ♕h6! (instead of 22 c5) 22...♗g7 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 24 ♗g3 ♗f6 25 c5! and Black faces very difficult problems:

1) 25...♕f4 26 c6! ♗xd4 (26...♗xc6 27 ♗a3+ ♗d6 28 ♗f3!) 27 ♗a3+ ♗c5 28 ♗xc5+ bxc5 29 cxb7 ♗b8 30 ♗f3 ♕c7 31 ♕h8+ ♔e7 32 ♗xf7+! ♔d6 33 ♕g7 and wins;

2) 25...♕d8 26 c6! ♗xc6 27 ♗a3+ ♗d6 28 ♕h6+ ♔e7 29 ♗f3 ♗h8 (29...♗xd4 30 ♕h4+) 30 ♕f4! with a very pretty win: if 30...♗f8 or 30...f5, then 31 ♗c3!! with the threat of ♕xd6+ and ♗c7+ is decisive, while if 30...f6 – 31 ♗h3! ♗g8 32 ♗h7+ ♗g7 33 ♕g3 (play over the entire board!);

3) 25...♕xg3!? (this gives at least some practical chances of a draw) 26 hxg3 bxc5 27 ♕h6+ ♗g7 (27...♔e7?! 28 ♕d2!) 28 ♕d2, and 28...a6? is weak after 29 ♗a3, but otherwise the a-pawn falls: 28...♗xd4 29 ♗xd4 cxd4 30 ♕b4+! ♗e7 31 ♕xd4, 28...♔g8 29 dxc5 ♗xb2 30 ♕xb2 ♗xc5 31 ♕d4!, or 28...cxd4!? 29 ♕b4+! ♔g8 30 ♕xb7 d3 31 ♗xg7 (both 31 ♗a3 d2 32 ♗e2 and 31 ♗xd3 ♗xb2 32 ♕xa7 must also be studied) 31...d2 32 ♗e2 ♔xg7 33 f3 ♗c1+ 34 ♔f2 d1♕ 35 ♗xd1 ♗xd1 36 ♕xa7.

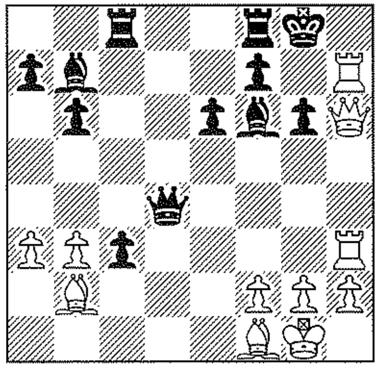
And so, common sense prevailed: 19...dxc4! – a natural, purely Smyslov-like move. With the opening of the centre Black immediately gains counterplay: he threatens ...c4-c3, and his rook at c8, queen at d8 and bishop at b7 all come into play. And there is no mate for White: for the moment the bishop at f6 holds everything together.

20 ♖xh7??

At the critical moment Keres's nerve fails and he commits a fatal mistake. It is clear that if 20 bxc4? Black can now play 20...gxh5 21 ♗d3 (21 ♕xh5 ♗e4!) 21...♖e8 22 ♕xh5 ♔f8, since after 23 a4 (23 ♗c3 a5) 23...♕d6 24 ♗f1 (24 c5 ♕d5; 24 ♗c4 ♗xe4 25 ♗a3 ♕xa3 26 ♖xa3 ♖xc4) 24...♕f4 25 ♗a3+ ♗e7 26 ♖h4 ♕f6 the attack comes to an end (Smyslov).

However, 20 ♕g4! would still have promised a draw. Bronstein gave the variation 20...c3 21 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♕xd4 23 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 24 ♖c7 gxh5 25 ♖xb7 ♖c8 26 ♗c4 with equality. I tried to improve Black's play with 20...cxb3!?, but here too the result is a draw: 21 ♖xh7 ♖c2 22 ♗d3 ♕c7 23 ♖3h6! ♖c1+ 24 ♗xc1 (only not 24 ♗f1? ♖xf1+ 25 ♔xf1 ♕c2 and wins) 24...♕xc1+ 25 ♗f1 ♗g7 26 ♕h4 (threatening 27 ♖h8+ ♗xh8 28 ♖xh8+ and ♖h7+ with perpetual check) 26...♗xh6 27 ♖xh6 ♖c8 (27...♕xh6? is bad due to 28 ♕xh6 b2 29 ♗d3 ♖c8 30 h4 ♖c1+ 31 ♔h2 b1♕ 32 ♗xb1 ♖xb1 33 ♕f4) 28 ♖h8+ ♔g7 29 ♖h7+ ♔g8 30 ♖h8+.

20...c3! (essentially it is all over: neither 21 ♗xc3? ♖xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♔xh7 nor 21 ♗c1 ♕xd4 is possible) **21 ♕c1 ♕xd4** (of course, not 21...cxb2?? 22 ♕h6 ♕xd4 23 ♖h8+ and mate) **22 ♕h6**



22...♖fd8

'At just the right time. Now the threat of 23 ♖h8+ is parried and the tripling of the heavy pieces on the h-file does not achieve its aim.' (Smyslov)

23 ♗c1 ♗g7 24 ♕g5 ♕f6 25 ♕g4 c2! (threatening ...♖d1) **26 ♗e2** (26 ♗g5 c1♕ and wins) **26...♖d4! 27 f4 ♖d1+! 28 ♗xd1 ♕d4+ 0-1**

This was one of those 'key moments', when a player's qualities are fully revealed. Was it an accident that Keres placed the game 'on its end' and played in an uncustomary manner? No, I think that this great player was simply unable to withstand the savage tension in decisive, culminating moments on the very approaches to the chess heights.

It is sufficient to recall how in 1959 he lost with White in what was essentially a decisive game to Tal (although he won the mini-match 3-1), or in the penultimate rounds of two other Candidates tournaments: in 1956 Keres lost a winning position to Filip (if he had won, he would have caught Smyslov), and in 1962 he was equally unexpectedly defeated by Benko (against whom he had previously won every time) and finished half a point behind Petrosian. Perhaps Paul Petrovich still had a spiritual trauma from his previous meetings with Botvinnik, a kind of 'Botvinnik-fear', which surfaced every time a match between them seemed almost inevitable?

On the day after his win against Keres, the inspired Smyslov also defeated Reshevsky. Bronstein also fell away, losing to Geller, and the question of the winner of the 1953 Candidates tournament was decided: 1. Smyslov – 18 out of 28; 2-4. Bronstein, Keres and Reshevsky – 16; 5. Petrosian – 15; 6-7. Geller and Najdorf – 14½ etc.

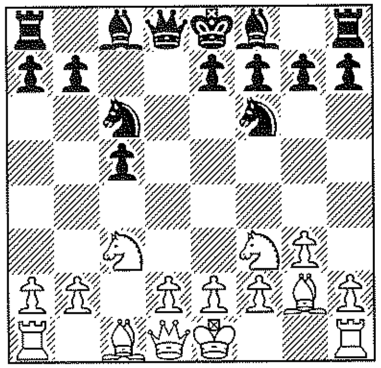
The second classic example is his game with Bronstein in the 16th round of the 1956 Candidates tournament in Amsterdam. This was a fantastically tense moment! Three rounds before the finish the six Soviet 'heavyweights' were literally breathing down one another's necks: Keres and Smyslov had 9 points, Bronstein and Geller – half a point less, Petrosian and Spassky – 8. In this intricate tournament situation Bronstein tried to play for a win with Black.

Game 104

V.Smyslov-D.Bronstein

Candidates Tournament,
Amsterdam 1956, 16th round
English Opening A34

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 c5 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 ♘c6 (Black can also try 4...d4 5 e3 ♘c6 6 exd4 cxd4 7 d3, transposing into a Modern Benoni with reversed colours and an extra tempo for White, but at that time they avoided this) **5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♘c3 ♘f6!?**



Typical David Ionovich! This is an extremely rare move and, of course, the usual 6...♘c7 looks better on all counts. With the knight on f6 Black can no longer play ...e7-e5 and ...f7-f6, and in addition White has greater opportunities for developing his initiative. But Bronstein was aiming for an original position.

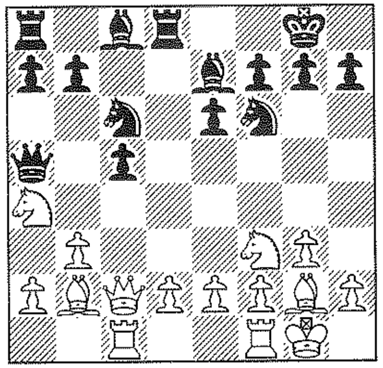
7 0-0 e6 8 b3 ♗e7 9 ♗b2 0-0

For the moment the two sides are occupied with development and there are no particular opportunities to sharpen the play. Goldberg recommended 9...♗d7, although after 10 d4! (in one go!) 10...♖c8 11 dxc5 ♗xc5 12 ♖c1 (12 a3!?) 12...0-0 13 ♘a4 ♗e7 14 ♘c5 White retains some advantage.

10 ♖c1 ♕a5 11 ♘a4 (11 d3 ♖d8 12 ♘d2!? is interesting, although this does not give any direct gains: 13...♕a6 13 ♘a4 ♘d5 etc.)

11...♖d8 12 ♕c2

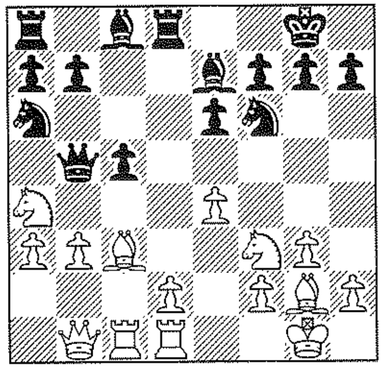
The simplest and most natural plan: an attack on the weak c5-pawn. The insipid 12 d3 ♗d7 13 ♘d2 ♖ac8 14 ♘c4 ♕a6 leads to equality. But now Black, who is experiencing problems in bringing his queen's bishop into play, must devise some kind of trickery.



12...♘b4 13 ♕b1 ♘fd5 (Black had to reckon with the threat of 14 ♘g5) **14 a3 ♘a6 15 e4**

According to Goldberg, this is the correct evaluation of the position, since after the 'passive' 15 ♕c2!? ♗d7 16 ♘c3 ♗c6 'Black's position is promising'. But in my opinion this applies to White's after 17 ♘e5! And Black also fails to gain complete equality with 16...f6!? 17 d3 ♗c6 18 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 19 e4 ♗c6 20 d4 ♖ac8 21 ♗h3 ♗d7 22 ♕e2.

15...♘f6 16 ♗c3 ♕b5!? (16...♕c7 allows 17 d4 cxd4 18 ♗xd4, although after 18...♕a5 19 ♗c3 ♕b5 20 ♖fd1 I am not at all sure that White has any advantage) **17 ♖fd1**



It appears to be difficult for Black to do anything: 17...♗d7? is bad because of 18 ♘e5 (with the idea of 18...♗e8 19 ♗f1 or 18...♕e2 19 f3!, winning), while 17...♕e8 is too passive – 18 ♘b2 etc. But Bronstein finds an interesting and unexpected resource.

17...c4!?

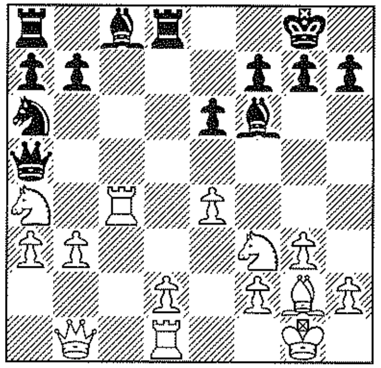
A typically Bronstein pawn sacrifice! It is surprising that, out of such a tedious opening, the players (largely Black) have started such a merry-go-round. Now a period of complicated play begins with unstable equilibrium and completely unclear consequences.

18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6

It was very dubious to play 18...gxf6?! 19 ♖xc4 ♗xa3 20 e5 f5 21 d4 ♕d7 (21...♗d7 22 d5! exd5 23 ♘c3) 22 d5 b5 (22...exd5?! 23 ♘c3 ♕e6 24 b4 and wins) 23 ♖cd4 with an attack.

19 ♖xc4 ♕a5

It transpires that White's army has got slightly stuck; Bronstein has managed to create something out of nothing!



20 e5!

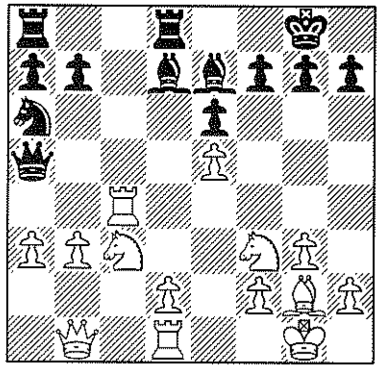
'An energetic reply. White avoids conceding the initiative.' (Smyslov) 20 ♖c2 ♗d7 21 d4 ♗xa4 22 bxa4 ♕xa4 would also have led to a rather unclear position.

20...♗e7

20...♗xe5?! 21 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♖xc8! (22 ♖dc1!? – Dvoretsky) 22...♖axc8 23 ♗xb7 (Smyslov) 23...♘c7 24 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 25 ♘c3 ♘b5 26 ♘xb5 ♕xb5 27 ♖c1 ♖d8 28 ♖c4! favours White.

21 ♘c3 ♗d7!

Bronstein ignores the counter pawn sacrifice: he too is fighting for the initiative! And indeed, it was dangerous to play 21...♕xa3?! (21...♗xa3? was bad because of 22 ♖a4 ♕c5 23 ♘e4 ♕e7 24 ♘fg5) 22 ♘e4. Smyslov and Goldberg continue 22...♕a5 23 ♘eg5 g6 24 ♖h4! ♗xg5 (24...h5 25 ♖xh5) 25 ♘xg5 ♕xe5 26 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 27 ♖xh7+ ♔f6 28 ♖e1 and Black has no defence. And the defensive try 22...♘b4!? 23 ♘eg5 g6 24 ♖f4! ♘d3 25 ♖xf7 h6 is refuted by 26 ♗f1! hxg5 27 ♗xd3 ♔xf7 28 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 29 ♗h5 ♖f8 (29...♗f8 30 ♕g6+ ♗g7 31 ♕f7+ ♔h8 32 ♘xg5 and wins) 30 ♕g6+ ♔h8 31 ♕h6+ ♔g8 32 ♘g5! ♗xg5 33 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 34 ♗g6 ♔g8 35 ♗d3+ ♔f7 36 ♕f6+ ♔e8 37 ♗b5+ ♗d7 38 ♕xe6+ ♕e7 39 ♗xd7+ ♖d8 40 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 41 ♗g4 and wins (Dvoretsky). These variations show the real power of White's threats.



22 b4!?

'By returning the pawn, White retains the initiative. After 22 a4 ♖ac8 Black would have obtained fair chances of counterplay on the queenside.' (Smyslov) I agree: he has the two bishops, his knight has the b4- and c5-squares, the e5-pawn is weak and for the moment it is hard for White to pay d2-d4 – in short, full compensation.

22...♕xa3 23 b5 ♘b4 24 ♘g5

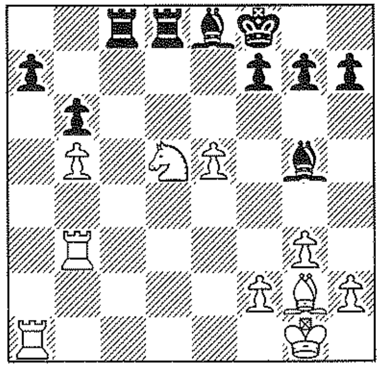
The invasion attempt 24 ♖c7 does not work in view of 24...♖ab8 25 ♕a1 ♕xa1 26 ♖xa1 a6 27 b6 ♔f8 – Black is left with the two bishops, whereas White's initiative peters out. Objectively White has no advantage, and Smyslov has to skilfully maintain the tension, without going beyond the bounds of acceptable risk.

24...♗xg5 (but not 24...g6?! 25 ♘ge4 ♘d5 26 ♖d4) **25 ♕xb4** (25 ♖xb4 ♖ab8 with equality) **25...♕xb4 26 ♖xb4 ♗e8 27 d4 ♖ac8 28 ♖b3 b6!?**

For some reason, this position (apparently, under the influence of the result of the game) was evaluated in favour of White. In my opinion, Black, with his bishops, is in no way worse. And whereas 28...♖c7 29 d5 exd5 30 ♘xd5 ♖c1 (30...♖cd7? 31 ♖bd3 ♔f8 32 h4 ♗e7 33 ♗h3 and wins) 31 ♖xc1 ♗xc1 32 ♖b1 ♗a3 33 ♘c7 ♖c8 34 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 35 f4 leaves White with some advantage, after 28...♖c4 29 d5 exd5 30 ♘xd5 ♖dc8 (30...♔f8) 31 h4 ♖c1 32 ♖bd3 ♖xd1+ 33 ♖xd1 ♖c1 34 ♖xc1 ♗xc1 35 ♘c7 ♗d7 36 ♗xb7 ♗b2 the position is a draw. But Bronstein is playing for a win!

29 d5 (getting rid of the weak pawn) **29...exd5 30 ♘xd5 ♔f8 31 ♖a1**

White also has nothing after 31 f4 ♗e7 32 ♖a1 ♖d7 with equality.



31...♗d2?

With time-trouble approaching Black fails to withstand the tension and commits a blunder. Apart from the obvious 31...♖c1+ 32 ♖xc1 ♗xc1 with a probable draw, he had a chance to fight for the initiative by 31...♖c5!? Here is the analysis of my ‘silicon friend’: 32 f4 ♗h6 (32...♗xb5? is incorrect due to 33 fxg5 ♗c4? 34 ♖c3 ♗xd5 35 ♖xc5 bxc5 36 ♖d1 and wins, or 33...♖cxd5 34 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 35 ♖xa7 ♖xe5 36 h4 etc.) 33 ♘e3 (33 ♘c3?! ♖d3 34 ♖aa3 g5! 35 ♗f1 ♖e3) 33...♗xb5 34 ♖xa7 g5! (34...♖c1+?! 35 ♘f1 ♗xf1 36 ♗xf1 ♖dd1 37 ♖f3 is far more tedious) 35 ♘f5 ♖c1+ 36 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 37 ♔f3 ♗e2+ (but not 37...♗c4?! 38 ♖b4 ♗d5+ 39 ♔g4 ♖xg2 40 ♖d4! ♔e8 41 ♘d6+ ♖xd6 42 exd6 ♗e6+ 43 f5 and wins) 38 ♔e4 ♗c4 39 ♖ba3 ♗d5+ 40 ♔e3 gxf4+ 41 gxf4 ♗xf4+ 42 ♔xf4 ♖xg2 43 ♖d3 ♖f2+ 44 ♔g4 h5+ 45 ♔g5 ♖g2+ 46 ♔h6 ♖g6+ 47 ♔h7 ♖g7+! 48 ♔h6 ♖g6+ and it is still a draw. Of course, these variations are excessively illustrative – a tribute to computer fashion!

By playing 31...♗d2, Bronstein wanted to switch his bishop to a5 and then drive away the knight by ...♖c5, after which White's position could have fallen apart... But he overlooked a strong tactical blow:

32 e6! ♗g5

Defending against the fork 33 e7+. The situation has changed sharply: Black is obliged to forget about his dreams of counterplay. If 32...fxe6?, then 33 ♖f3+ ♗f7 34 ♖xa7 is decisive, while after 32...♖d6? 33 e7+ ♔g8 34 ♖d3 ♗g5 (34...♗a5 35 ♘f6+! ♖xf6 36 ♖d8) 35 f4 ♖xd5 36 ♗xd5 (or 36 ♖xd5 ♗xe7 37 ♖xa7 – Dvoretsky) 36...♗xe7 (36...♗xb5 37 hxg5 ♗xd3 38 ♗c6!) 37 ♖xa7 ♔f8 38 ♔c6 White wins.

33 h4 fxe6

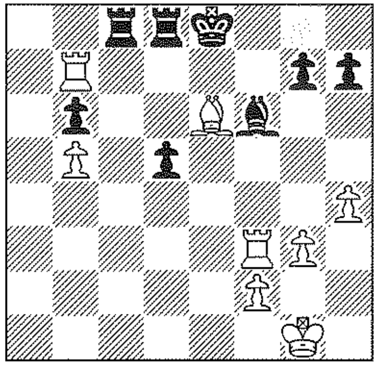
33...♗f6 is no better after 34 ♖xa7 fxe6 35 ♘xf6 gxf6 36 ♖xh7, and if 36...♖c5, then 37 ♗c6 ♗xc6 38 bxc6 ♖xc6 39 ♖a3 ♔g8 40 ♖aa7 e5 41 h5 f5 42 ♖ag7+ ♔f8 43 ♖g5 ♖d1+ 44 ♔g2 ♖f6 45 h6 and wins.

34 ♖f3+ ♔g8 35 ♗h3! ♗d7 (35...♗f7? 36 ♖xa7; 35...♖d6? 36 hxg5) **36 ♖xa7 exd5 37 ♖xd7** ‘Worth considering was 37 ♗xd7!? ♖c1+ 38 ♔g2 ♗f6 39 ♗e6+ ♔h8 (39...♔f8 40 ♖e3! with the threat of ♖f7+) 40 ♗xd5 or 40 ♖b7 d4 41 ♗f5.’ (Dvoretsky)

37...♗f6

‘After 37...♖xd7 38 ♗xd7 ♖c1+ 39 ♔g2 ♗f6 40 ♗e6+ ♔f8 41 ♗xd5 White wins a pawn.’ (Smyslov) As it soon transpires, this was the best that Black could have achieved.

38 ♗e6+ ♔f8 39 ♖f7+ ♔e8 40 ♖b7



40...♖c1+?

The last move before the control in a severe time scramble! 40...♖b8! was the only saving chance. It is possible that after 41 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 42 ♗xd5 Smyslov, with his technique, would have converted his extra pawn, but I wouldn't say that the position is objectively won. Psychologically it was very hard for Black to go in for it: not seeing a forced loss, Bronstein, naturally, wanted to maintain material equality...

41 ♔g2 ♖d6 42 ♗f5

‘White could have won immediately by 42 ♖e3! ♖d8 43 ♗h3 with the terrible threat of 44 ♖b8+ ♔c7 45 ♖ee8.’ (Dvoretsky)

42...g6

I tried to find a way to save the game after 42...h6, but in vain: 43 ♖e3+ ♔f8 (43...♔d8? 44 ♖b8+) 44 h5! (this is better than Smyslov's recommended 44 ♖b8+) 44...♖d8 45 ♗e6! d4 46 ♖e4 and wins. White has an ultra-active rook at b7 and the threats to the king are decisive. The material equality is illusory: the qualitative potential of the white pieces is incomparably higher.

43 ♗d3 ♗e7 44 ♖e3 ♖d7 45 ♖xb6 d4 46 ♖f3 ♗d6 47 ♖a6 ♔e7 48 ♖a8 ♗c5 (if 48...♖d8, then 49 ♖a7+ ♖c7 50 b6 ♖xa7 51 bxa7 ♖a8 52 ♗c4 and wins) **49 ♖h8 ♔d6 50 ♖c8 ♔d5 51 h5!**

Breaking up the enemy pawns. Smyslov elegantly builds up an attack, combining threats to the pawns and to the king, and very confidently converts his advantage into a win. For me this evokes rather unpleasant memories of the finish to the fourth game of my second match with Karpov (Moscow 1985). There, it is true, the queens were still on, but there was the same light-square strategy and a black passed d-pawn that was going nowhere.

51...♖c3 (51...gxh5? 52 ♖f5+ ♔d6 53 ♖c6+; 51...♖d6 52 ♖c7) **52 hxg6 hxg6 53 ♖c6 ♖b7 54 ♖xg6 ♖xd3 55 ♖xd3 ♔c4 56 ♖d1 d3 57 ♖c1+ 1-0**

If 57...♔xb5 the simplest is 58 ♖g5 ♖c7 59 ♔f1 and ♖xc5.

After taking the sole lead, Vasily Vasilievich drew with Spassky, beat Pilnik – and became winner: 1. Smyslov – 11½ out of 18; 2. Keres – 10; 3-7. Bronstein, Geller, Petrosian, Spassky and Szabo – 9½ etc.

What enormous latent tension is concealed in these duels, initially so deceptively quiet! Truly: he who sows the wind, reaps the whirlwind... And as a result the winner is always the one who more strongly controls the situation and events.

In those years Smyslov did this better than anyone, and therefore he was able to win decisive games against his main rivals.

First Attempt

Before the first Botvinnik-Smyslov match (Moscow 1954) a dispute arose concerning its commencement date. The challenger pressed for 15 April, and the champion for 16 March, to avoid playing in June, when it can be hot in Moscow. It need hardly be said that Botvinnik won this little psychological duel:

‘It was even necessary to recall one point of the rules that was then in force – perhaps the most cunning invention of mine, which was included in 1949 in the rules for staging matches for the world championship: if the participants were unable to come to an agreement, FIDE would annul the match and conduct a match-tournament of four – the champion and the first three winners of the Candidates event (the tournament would be held with whatever number of participants came forward to play). It is clear that for the champion and the challenger this tournament is unfavourable: this means that they had to be more compliant and not to argue!'

This rule was abolished only in the 1956 FIDE Congress, where the no less exotic right of an ex-champion to join as a third player in the match of the next cycle was replaced by the right of a return match. The FIDE President Folke Rogard was generally opposed to match-tournaments, fearing agreements between the participants. Botvinnik held a different opinion: 'The situation arising in 1972 and 1975, when difficulties in negotiations between the match participants were artificially created by one side, would not have been possible if this truly wise rule of the match-tournament of four had still been in effect.'

The 1954 match began catastrophically for Smyslov: ½-3½. Mikhail Moiseevich had learned his lesson from the very difficult duel with Bronstein and he arrived for this new test in good form. But Smyslov too, after becoming accustomed to the heavy hand of his opponent (*Game No.70*) was able to reveal himself in all his glory: from the seventh to the 11th games he scored 4½ out of 5, spectacularly crushing Botvinnik in his favourite French Defence.

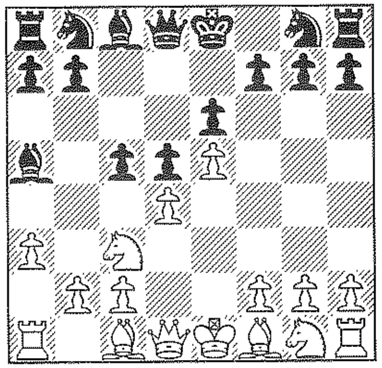
Game 105

V.Smyslov-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1954, 9th game
French Defence C17

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗a5

A distinctive variation, which came into use after the Reshevsky-Botvinnik game (USSR-USA match, Moscow 1946). However, for many years the main continuation has been 5...♗xc3+ (*Game No.127*).



6 b4

A well-known pawn sacrifice, pointed out by Alekhine in the New York 1924 tournament book. Alternatives have also been tried: thus in Linares 2000, against Khalifman, Leko played the immediate 6 ♕g4!? ♘e7 7 dxc5 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 (following in the footsteps of Reshevsky!), while I went 6 ♗d2 ♘c6 (6...cxd4 7 ♘b5) 7 ♕g4!? ♔f8 8 dxc5! ♘xe5 9 ♕g3.

6...cxd4 (weaker is 6...cxb4?! 7 ♘b5) **7 ♕g4!?**

An energetic sortie. The alternative is 7 ♘b5 ♗c7 8 f4, but in the third game there occurred 8...♘e7 9 ♘f3 ♗d7 (intending ...♗xb5) 10 ♘bxd4 (later they arrived at 10 ♘xc7! ♕xc7 11 ♗d3) 10...♘bc6 11 c3 ♘xd4 with equality. A modern example is 8...♗d7 9 ♘xc7+ ♕xc7 10 ♗d3 a6 11 ♘f3 ♘h6 12 ♗b2 (12 0-0 ♗b5!; 12 a4!?) 12...♗a4 (12...♗b5?! 13 ♗xb5+ axb5 14 ♘xd4 ♕c4 15 ♕d3!; 12...0-0 13 ♘g5!) 13 ♗xd4 ♗b5 14 0-0 ♘f5 15 ♗f2 with the initiative for White (Ponomariov-Vaganian, Yerevan 2001).

7...♘e7

7...♔f8 8 bxa5 (8 ♘b5!?) 8...dxc3 9 ♘f3 ♘e7 10 ♗d3 ♘d7 11 ♕b4 ♕c7 12 0-0 ♘c5 13 ♕xc3 favours White (Unzicker-Botvinnik, Amsterdam Olympiad 1954).

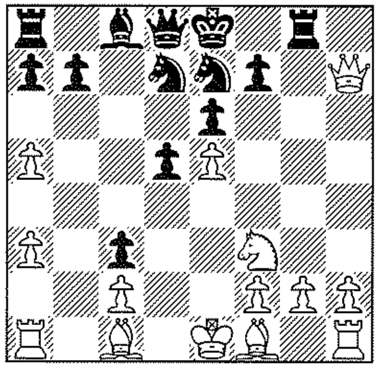
8 bxa5 (8 ♘b5!? ♗c7 9 ♕xg7 ♖g8 10 ♕xh7 a6! 11 ♘xc7+ ♕xc7 12 ♘e2 ♕xe5 13 ♗b2 also leads to sharp play) **8...dxc3 9 ♕xg7 ♖g8 10 ♕xh7 ♘d7?!**

It is more active to play 10...♘bc6! 11 ♘f3 ♕c7, intending ...♗d7 and ...0-0-0 (Fischer-Tal, Leipzig Olympiad 1960).

At the end of the last century a great contribution to the revival of the 5...♗a5 variation was made by grandmasters Vaganian and Lputian. It also began to be played in super-tournaments: mention should be made, among others, of two Anand-Khalifman duels (Linares and Dortmund 2000), where instead of 11 ♘f3 White played 11 f4 ♕xa5 12 ♘f3 ♗d7 13 ♖b1 0-0-0 14 ♕d3 with chances for both sides.

11 ♘f3

Smyslov rejected 11 f4!? since 'the scope of the dark-squared bishop is restricted.'



11...♘f8?

Botvinnik studied this position before his 1951 match with Bronstein and in a training game with Ragozin he played 11...♕c7! After 12 ♗f4 (Keres's move 12 a6 is unclear in view of 12...♘xe5) 12...♘f8 (with the same idea of ...♘fg6) 13 ♗b5+ ♗d7 14 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 15 ♕d3 ♖g4! 16 g3 (16 ♗g5 ♖e4+!? 17 ♔f1 ♘fg6) 16...♘fg6 17 ♗e3 ♘c6 Black, after picking up the e5-pawn, gained equal chances.

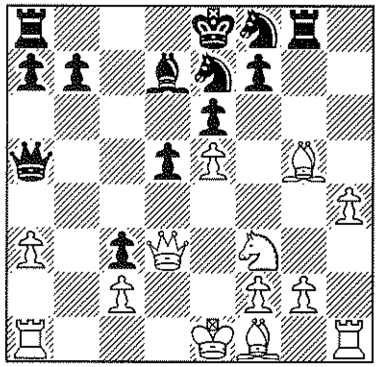
If 11...♕c7 Smyslov was planning 'the strong reply 12 ♗b5! a6 (it is dangerous to play 12...♖xg2?! 13 ♔f1 ♖g8 14 ♖g1, when the black king may find itself in a desperate situation) 13 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 14 0-0 also with the better game for White.' But this is not so! After 14...♕c4 15 ♘g5 0-0-0 16 g3, which has occurred in practice, the machine produces 16...♖h8! (but not 16...♘f5? 17 ♘xf7 ♗b5 18 ♗g5) 17 ♕d3 (17 ♕xf7? ♖xh2!) 17...♕xd3 18 cxd3 ♗e8 with equality.

In addition, Euwe examined 14...d4 15 ♗g5 (15 ♘g5?! 0-0-0 16 ♘xf7 ♗c6 17 ♗g5 ♘f5 18 h4 ♔b8! is unfavourable for White) 15...♗c6 16 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 17 ♕h4+ (17 ♘g5?! ♖xg5 18 ♕h4 ♕xe5 19 f4 ♕e3+ 20 ♖f2 ♖ag8 21 fxg5 ♖xg5 22 ♔h1 f6) 17...♔e8 18 ♘g5 ♕xe5 19 f4, 'and White has a slight initiative in the centre.' However, in my view, Black's chances are not worse after the response 19...♕f6.

12 ♕d3 (12 ♕h5!?) **12...♕xa5 13 h4!** (it was also possible to begin with 13 ♗g5!?) **13...♗d7 14 ♗g5!**

'The consequence of the inaccuracy committed by Black on the 11th move.' (Botvinnik)

'The bishop takes up a highly advantageous position. It not only prevents castling, but also completely dominates the weakened dark squares. Now both kings remain in the centre, but White's advantage is undisputed. The most important factor is the possibility of advancing the h-pawn.' (Smyslov)



14...♖c8

Neither Botvinnik nor Smyslov commented on this move, but some theoreticians have condemned it and suggested 14...♘c6 (parrying 15 ♘d4). Possibly they drew inspiration from 15 ♗f6?! ♖g4! 16 ♗e2 ♖e4 17 ♘g5 ♘b4 18 ♕d1 ♖d4! 19 ♕c1 ♘xc2+ 20 ♕xc2 ♗a4 21 ♕a2 c2+ 22 ♔f1 ♕d2 23 ♕b2 ♖c8 24 ♖c1 ♕xc1+ 25 ♕xc1 ♖d1+ 26 ♗xd1 cxd1♕+ 27 ♕xd1 ♗xd1 with a roughly equal endgame (Tringov-Oren, Moscow Olympiad 1956). But after 15 ♗e2 or 15 g3 with an eventual ♗f6 White retains an obvious advantage.

15 ♘d4!

'Very subtly and strongly played!' (Botvinnik) 'This centralisation of the knight simultaneously eliminates the threat of ...♖c4-e4+. If 15...♖c4 there follows 16 ♕e3! ♖a4 17 ♖b1 ♖xa3 18 ♘b5 with an attack.' (Smyslov)

14...♘f5 (apart from ...♖c4 there is now the threat of 16...♘xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♗b5, exchanging the 'bad' bishop) **16 ♖b1!**

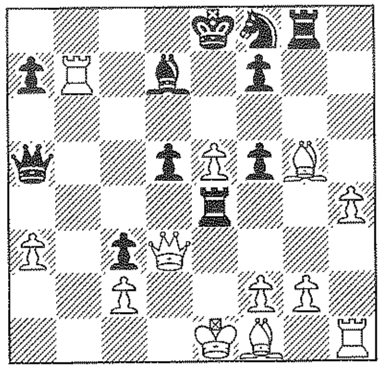
'Brilliantly played. Already here White had to judge that the following exchange sacrifice was not dangerous for him.' (Botvinnik) In the event of 16 ♘xf5?! exf5 the d3-h7 diagonal would have been blocked and the knight at f8 would have acquired the convenient e6-square.

16...♖c4?

'A fatal idea, since Black's counterplay encounters an elegant refutation.' (Smyslov) In the opinion of both players, it was better to play 16...b6 (16...♘xd4 17 ♕xd4 b6 18 ♗d3) 17 g4 ♘xd4 18 ♕xd4 ♕xa3 19 ♗d3, although this too is advantageous to White.

17 ♘xf5 exf5 18 ♖xb7 ♖e4+?!

'Absent-mindedly, I simply forgot about the threat of ♖b8+. However, even after the previously planned reply 18...♖xg5 Black is in a difficult position: after 19 hxg5 ♖e4+ 20 ♗e2! ♘g6 (20...♘e6? 21 g6! fxg6 22 ♖h8+ ♔e7 23 ♖h7+) 21 ♔f1! (I underestimated this move) 21...♗c6 (21...♘f4 22 ♕a6) 22 ♖b8+ ♔e7 23 ♕a6 he has only problematic chances of saving the endgame.' (Botvinnik)



19 ♕xe4!!

'This fine queen sacrifice decides the outcome of this brief but stormy battle. The black king finds itself in a mating net.' (Smyslov) In the words of Botvinnik, the further 'struggle' was not necessary...

19...dxe4 20 ♖b8+ ♗c8 21 ♗b5+ ♕xb5 (21...♘d7? 22 ♖xc8+) **22 ♖xb5 ♘e6 23 ♗f6 ♖xg2 24 h5 ♗a6 25 h6 1-0**

The h-pawn has the final say. 'Undoubtedly Smyslov's best achievement in the match.' (Botvinnik)

After then also winning the 10th and 11th games, the challenger took the lead for the only time in the entire match: 6-5.

'After this my fighting spirit returned,' writes Botvinnik. 'To my aid came – my opponent! Whereas Smyslov had played very cautiously in the first 11 games of the match (with the exception, perhaps, of the fourth), after my three successive defeats he apparently decided that the time had come to change his match tactics and to launch a determined offensive. This great psychological mistake made things easier for me: in the double-edged 12th game, Smyslov aimed for the initiative right to the end, and it was because of this that I was able to gain an important win.'

I remember that Mikhail Moiseevich was very proud of this particular game and he considered it his greatest achievement in the match.

Game 106

M.Botvinnik-V.Smyslov

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1954, 12th game
Slav Defence D18

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4

Smyslov's favourite defence, which, apparently fearing some surprise, he employed only in this game.

5 a4 (5 e3 *Game No.85*) **5...♗f5 6 e3**

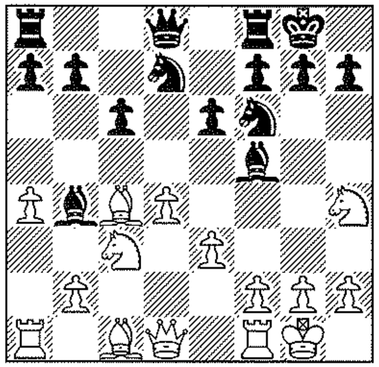
Later Botvinnik came to the conclusion that 6 ♘e5 was more promising (cf. the Alekhine-Euwe matches: *Games Nos.10, 14, 15 and 20*), but at that time he was 'influenced by Spielmann's ideas of another use of the king's knight.'

6...e6 7 ♗xc4 ♗b4 8 0-0 ♘bd7 (a variation that was approved by Smyslov in the Candidates tournament, Zürich 1953) **9 ♘h4!?**

9 ♕e2 or 9 ♕b3 is more traditional (*Game No.21*).

9...0-0

A rapid reply, although Black also has the audacious 9...♗g4 10 f3 ♘d5?! 11 fxg4 ♕xh4 12 ♕f3 (Tal-Haag, Tbilisi 1969) or 10...♗h5 (Portisch-Smyslov, Amsterdam 1981), as well as the more cautious 9...♗g6.



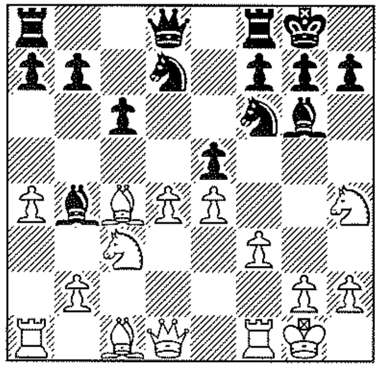
10 f3

A typical plan of a central offensive. A modern *tabiya* arises after 10 ♘xf5 exf5. Another interesting idea is 10 h3!?, for example: 10...♗g6 11 ♘xg6 hxg6 12 ♕c2 with a slight advantage (Kasparov-Anand, Linares 1993) or 10...♖c8!, preparing ...c6-c5 (Kasparov-Kramnik, Paris rapidplay 1994).

10...♗g6 11 e4

Later they tried 11 ♘xg6!? hxg6 12 ♕c2 (12 ♕b3!?) with the idea of 12...e5? 13 ♕xg6, 12...c5 13 ♘a2!, or 12...a5 13 ♖d1 ♕b6 14 ♔h1 ♖ac8 15 ♖b1! c5 16 d5 ♘e5 17 ♗f1 c4 18 e4 etc. Black also does not fully equalise with 12...♕a5 13 ♘a2 ♗e7 14 b4 ♕c7 15 ♗d2 ♖fd8 16 ♖ab1 (Yusupov-Smyslov, Montpellier Candidates 1985), but 12...♖c8! is stronger (Razuvaev-Dokhoian, Irkutsk 1986).

11...e5 (an essential blow at the centre, despite the strengthening of the bishop at c4)



12 ♘xg6

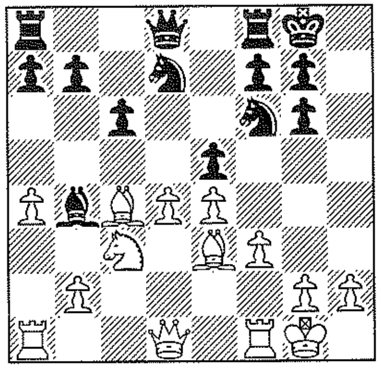
'It is always tempting to gain the advantage of the two bishops, but White should have played as suggested by Levenfish: 12 dxe5! ♘xe5 13 ♗e2, and after 13...♕b6+ (or 13...♕xd1 14 ♖xd1) 14 ♔h1 ♖ad8 15 ♕c2 his chances are better: the bishop at g6 is out of play!' (Botvinnik)

Subsequently this recommendation was subjected to practical testing, which did not confirm any particular advantage for White: 15...♕d4 16 ♗g5 ♗e7!? (Hübner), or 15...♕c5 16 ♗f4 (16 ♘xg6 hxg6 17 ♗f4 ♘c4 with equality) 16...♘c4! etc. In addition, instead of 13...♕b6+ Black also has 13...♕e7 14 ♕b3 ♖ad8 15 ♗e3 ♗c5! or 13...♘fd7!? 14 ♘xg6

♘xg6, as played by Morozevich.

12...hxg6 13 ♗e3

'A routine move. Here too White should have played 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗e2, not allowing the pin on the a7-g1 diagonal.' (Botvinnik) Although, Black has no more problems than in the previous note. As, however, is also the case after 13 ♘a2 ♗a5 14 dxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗e2 ♕e7 16 ♕c2 ♘ed7 17 ♔h1 ♖fe8 18 ♘c3 ♕c5 19 ♕b3 a6 20 ♗d2 ♖ad8 21 ♖ad1 ♘e5 22 ♗e1 ♖xd1 23 ♕xd1 ♖d8 24 ♕b3 ½-½ (Gelfand-Khalifman, Las Vegas 1999).



13...♕e7

'Incorrect. After 13...♕b6! 14 ♔h1 ♖ad8 15 dxe5 ♕xe3 16 exf6 ♘xf6 17 ♕b3 the chances are roughly equal.' (Botvinnik) Therefore other moves have been tried in practice: 15 f4 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♘xe4 17 ♕f3 exd4 18 ♗xd4 c5 with equality (Gelfand-Almasi, Pamplona 1999) and 15 ♘e2!?

In addition, 13...♕a5!? has been played (Bareev-Tukmakov, Sochi 1987) as well as, strangely enough, 13...♕e7 – in short, the diagram position has become a theoretical *tabiya.* But then, in 1954, it was a new one, and it has to be said that both great players handled it very resourcefully.

14 ♕e2 (here too 14 ♘e2!? is interesting)

14...exd4

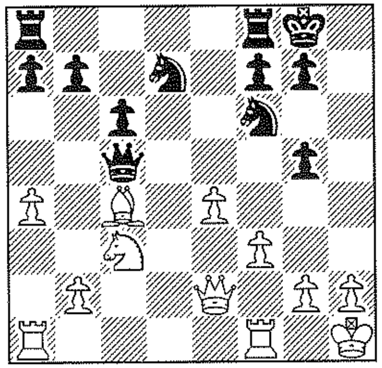
Perhaps it is more precise to play 14...♖fd8 (14...♖ad8!?) 15 ♔h1 exd4 16 ♗xd4 ♗c5 17 ♗xc5 ♘xc5! 18 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♖d8 20 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 21 e5 ♘d5 22 ♕d2 ½-½ (Gelfand-Anand, Haifa rapidplay 2000).

15 ♗xd4 ♗c5

'The exchange of the dark-squared bishops reduces somewhat White's attacking potential.' (Botvinnik) He retains a small plus, but Black gains the opportunity for counterplay on the dark squares. In such flexible positions the player who succeeds is usually the one who simply plays better.

16 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 17 ♔h1 g5!?

Inhibiting f3-f4. 'Quite justified. White's plan is to advance his e- and f-pawns, which with the support of his long-range bishop may become very dangerous. Now, in order to make such an advantage, he will have to expose his king, which will give Black some counter-chances.' (Botvinnik)



18 g3!

For those times this was a bold move: this is after all a pawn in front of the king! A game in the 21st century went 18 ♗a2 g6 (18...♖ad8!?) 19 f4 gxf4 20 ♖xf4 ♔g7 21 ♖af1 with pressure on f7. But Botvinnik inexorably carries out his clear-cut plan: he wants to advance the e- and f- pawn pair!

18...♖ad8

18...♘e5?! is an empty blow in view of 19 ♗a2, when White attacks with gain of tempo: 19...g4 20 f4 ♘f3 21 e5 ♘d5 (21...♖ad8 22 ♖ad1) 22 ♘xd5 cxd5 23 h3, winning a pawn, or 19...♖ad8 20 f4! gxf4 21 gxf4 etc.

19 ♗a2

'Premature was 19 f4 gxf4 20 gxf4 ♘b6 21 ♗a2 ♖d4 22 a5 (or 22 e5 ♘fd5 23 ♘e4 ♕e7!) 22...♘c4 23 e5 ♘d5 24 ♘e4 ♕b4 with complicated, double-edged play: 25 ♖g1 (*it is too early for 25 ♘f6+?! ♘xf6 26 exf6 ♖d2 27 ♕xc4 ♕xb2 28 ♕e4 ♖xb2+ 29 ♔g1 ♖b3 30 ♕g2 ♕d4+ 31 ♕f2 ♕e4 32 ♕g2 ♕d4+ – G.K.*) 25...♖d8 26 ♕g4 g6 27 e6 ♕e7.' (Botvinnik)

However, after 26 ♘f6+! ♔f8 (26...♘xf6 27 exf6 g6 28 ♖ac1 and wins) 27 ♘xd5 cxd5 28 ♕h5 Black stands badly. Even after the improvement 25...g6! 26 ♖af1 White has a strong attack.

And yet the champion was right: 19 f4 was premature! Only not because of 24...♕b4?, but in view of 24...♖xe4! 25 ♕xe4 ♘d2 with equality.

19...♖fe8 20 ♖ad1

'Here too 20 f4 would have given Black counterplay after 20...gxf4 21 gxf4 ♕h5.' (Botvinnik) But in my opinion, this came into consideration, since after 22 ♕g2 White could have created dangerous threats: 22...♕h6 23 e5 ♘h5 24 ♕f2 ♘b6 25 ♘e4, or 22...♘c5 23 e5 ♘h7 24 b4 ♘d3 25 ♘e4.

20...♘f8

An efficient defence along the back rank. I am not completely sure whether 20...♕b4!? 21 ♕d2 ♕a5 22 ♕e3 would have been better. In either case White retains some initiative, but up to a certain point Smyslov suppresses it quite accurately.

21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22 e5 ♘d5 (22...♖e8 23 f4!) **23 ♘xd5** (23 ♘e4?! ♕e7) **23...cxd5**

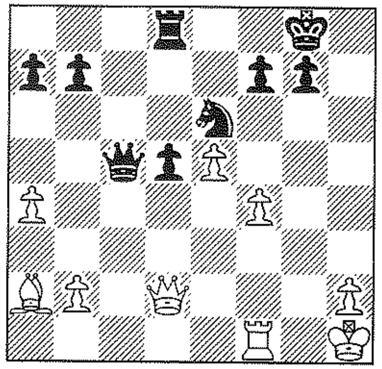
The position has been transformed somewhat: the d-file and the a2-g8 diagonal have been blocked, and Black has been given an isolated d5-pawn – on the one hand it is passed, but on the other hand it is an obvious weakness.

24 ♕d2!

'It is very important, with gain of tempo (by attacking the g5-pawn), to make the b4- and d4-squares inaccessible to the enemy queen. The immediate 24 f4 gxf4 25 gxf4 ♕d4 26 ♕g2 ♕e4 27 ♕xe4 dxe4 leads to an ending with only a minimal advantage to White.' (Botvinnik)

24...♘e6 25 f4 gxf4 26 gxf4

At last White has slightly exposed his king. It is clear that f4-f5 is on the agenda.



26...♕c6?

This would appear to be the decisive mistake: Smyslov is tempted by short-term counterplay. According to Botvinnik, 'it was essential to provoke the exchange of queens – 26...♕d4! 27 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 28 ♖d1 ♘e6 29 f5 (*29 ♗xd5 ♔f8 30 f5 ♘f4 31 ♗f3 ♖xd1+ 32 ♗xd1 ♘d3! – G.K.*) 29...♘c5 30 ♖d4 (or 30 ♗xd5 ♔f8 31 a5 ♘a4) 30...♔f8 31 ♔g2 ♔e7 32 a5 g6 with real chances of a draw.'

And indeed, although Black is all the time defending, the position is close to a draw – there is too little material. For example: 33 fxg6 fxg6 34 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 35 ♗xd5 ♘d3 36 ♗xb7 ♘xb2 37 ♔f3 ♘d3! (but not 37...♘c4? 38 ♔e4 ♘xa5 39 ♗d5 and wins) 38 ♔g4 ♘xe5+ 39 ♔g5 ♔f7 40 ♗d5+ ♔g7 41 h3 ♘d7 with a draw.

However, it is hard to have the courage to go into an endgame a pawn down, if you think that, as it is, everything is fine...

27 f5 ♘c5 28 ♕g5!

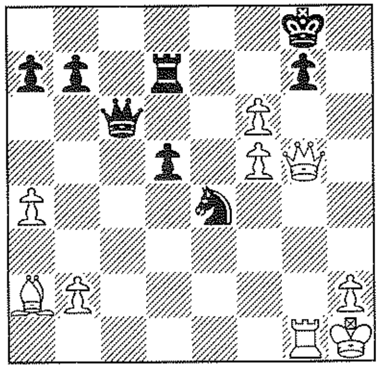
Suddenly White gains a crushing attack. After the direct 28 f6?! he would indeed have had problems with his own king: 28...♘e4 29 ♕g2 g6 30 ♕h3 ♕a6! etc.

28...♖d7

Or 28...♕e8 29 ♖g1 ♕f8 30 ♕h4 and wins. 28...f6 would also not have saved Black, in view of 29 ♕g2 fxe5 30 b4! ♘d3 31 f6 ♕d7 32 ♕e4! ♘f4 33 ♕xe5 ♘e6 34 ♖f5 (Averbakh, Romanovsky), while after 30...♘xa4 31 f6 ♕d7 there is a choice between 32 fxg7 ♘b6 (32...♘c3 33 ♕f3 ♕xg7 34 ♕xc3) 33 ♕g5 ♖c8 34 ♕h6 ♕xg7 35 ♖g1 and the more elegant machine win 32 f7+ ♔f8 33 ♕g5 ♘c3 34 ♖g1 g6 35 ♕h6+ ♔e7 36 ♖xg6 ♕f5 37 ♕h4+ ♔d7 38 ♖d6+ ♔xd6 39 ♕xd8+ ♔c6 40 ♗xd5+! (but not 40 f8♕? ♕e4+ 41 ♔g1 ♕g4+ with perpetual check) 40...♘xd5 41 b5+! ♔xb5 42 ♕xd5+ ♔a6 43 ♕d6+ and 44 f8♕.

29 ♖g1 (increasing the pressure) **29...f6** (29...g6? 30 e6! and wins) **30 exf6 ♘e4**

'It was on this intermediate move that Black was pinning his hopes: in the event of 31 ♕g2? ♘xf6 the d5-pawn is securely defended and all the white pawns are weak.' (Botvinnik)



31 f7+!

An unpleasant surprise! This counter-interposition decides the game. 'White's opening idea achieves its completion – the light-squared bishop comes into play with decisive effect.' (Botvinnik)

31...♖xf7 (31...♔xf7? 32 ♕xg7+) **32 ♕d8+ ♔h7 33 ♗xd5** (truly a family fork!) **33...♘f2+ 34 ♔g2 ♕f6 35 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 36 ♔xf2 ♖xf5+ 37 ♗f3 ♖f4 38 ♖g4 1-0**

What a battle of plans – and what consistent play by White! A modern game, rich in content (and, in my opinion, one that has been underestimated by the commentators).

'Smyslov's reckless play in the opening of the 13th game brought me a new success,' writes Botvinnik. 'However, the same tactics enabled Smyslov to gain a spectacular win in the next, 14th game, but it seems to me that this win contributed to the subsequent course that was unfavourable for my opponent. It reinforced Smyslov's confidence in the correctness of his risky play.'

However, Vasily Vasilievich was rightly proud of this game, since it was a reflection of the different approaches taken by the two players to the problems of opening preparation. 'Botvinnik would purposefully prepare for a specific opponent and, no doubt, he considered such a method to be not only correct, but also the only one worthy of consideration. Of course, in my preparations for a match I also took account of my opponent's chess individuality, his tastes, but even so I did not restrict myself only to the psychology of the struggle, but studied opening schemes with all these branches, aiming for a broad and objective evaluation of the position.'

Indeed, in those years Smyslov did a great deal of work on the opening, especially from the point of view of Black, and created new trends even in those openings that did not come into his main repertoire, not fully corresponding to his 'mild' style of play. A vivid example of such an innovation is provided by the 14th game, in which from the very first attempt Smyslov was able to breath new life into a 'manly' opening – the King's Indian Defence.

Game 107

M.Botvinnik-V.Smyslov

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1954, 14th game
King's Indian Defence E68

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0

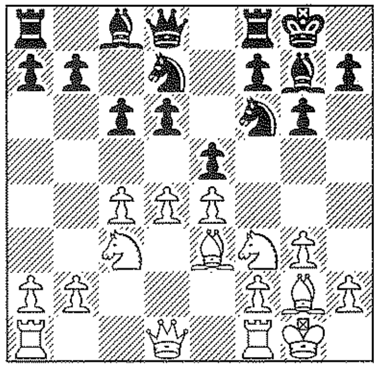
'Thus, Smyslov decided also to try the King's Indian Defence,' writes Botvinnik, apparently content that his opponent did not transpose into his approved Grünfeld Defence by 4...d5 or 3...c6 4 ♗g2 d5.

5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♘f3

In the next three even-numbered games White tried the modest 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 ♘ge2 and then 7...e5 (it is slightly inferior to play 7....a6 8 b3 ♖b8 9 a4 e5 10 ♗a3 b6 11 0-0 ♗b7 – 18th matchgame) 8 b3 ♖e8! 9 ♗a3 (9 a4!?) 9...h5!? (9...♖b8 10 0-0 a6 is also not bad – 16th matchgame) 10 h3 a6 11 dxe5 dxe5! 12 e4?! ♘h7 13 0-0 h4 14 ♗c1 c6 15 ♗e3 hxg3 16 fxg3 ♕e7! with the initiative for Black (20th matchgame).

6...♘bd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 c6 (9...♖e8 10 ♗e3!? was tried in Botvinnik-Boleslavsky, Moscow 1952) **9 ♗e3**

A curious detail: previously in official events the champion had played only 9 d5 or 9 h3 (nowadays this is considered the best reply, along with 9 b3). But the challenger, in spite of this not being 'his' opening, also anticipated another development of events.



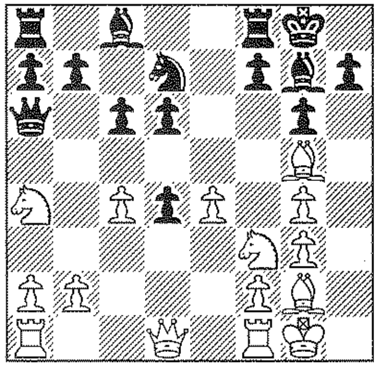
9...♘g4! 10 ♗g5 ♕b6 11 h3 exd4!

'My opponent made these three moves instantly, which genuinely surprised me,' remarks Botvinnik. 'Indeed, it is surprising that Smyslov was able to make highly detailed preparations for a variation that I had never before employed, except in training games...'

Summing up the results of the game, the champion expanded on this thought: 'A great creative achievement of Smyslov is his skilful preparation... In contrast to Bronstein (*! – G.K.*) he was able to demonstrate such interesting achievements, that it was if in this respect he had made a new step forward... In 1939 I suggested a method which can help a master to prepare variations, refuting systems that have already been employed in practice. Smyslov has gone significantly further: he has apparently found a method of studying his opponent's play, enabling him to guess variations which have not yet been employed by the given grandmaster.'

Later Vasily Vasilievich responded to his excessively suspicious opponent: 'The methods of opening preparation are well known and do not contain any secrets. 9 ♗e3 had also been played earlier, so that when evaluating the material on the system with 8...c6, along with 9 d5 and 9 h3 this move was also examined. And I was able to discover the improvement 11...exd4! (instead of 11...♘f6, Lilienthal-Konstantinopolsky, Sochi 1952). Such is the history of the novelty...' A novelty which in the end put 9 ♗e3 out of use!

12 ♘a4 ♕a6 13 hxg4



13...b5!

Regaining the temporarily sacrificed piece, and leading to mutual pawn weaknesses and a position of dynamic equilibrium.

14 ♘xd4

'I came to the conclusion that White had no advantage and that he should go in for the win of the exchange. Indeed, both 14 c5 (14 cxb5 cxb5 is weak) 14...dxc5 15 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 16 ♗e7 ♘e6 and 14 ♗e7 ♖e8 15 ♗xd6 bxa4 16 ♘xd4 ♘e5! give Black fine play.' (Botvinnik)

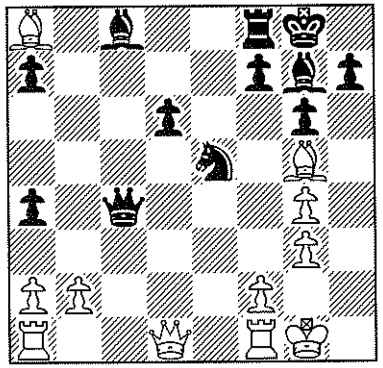
Nearly four decades later, in Linares 1992, Yusupov dumbfounded me with this half-forgotten variation. Instead of 16 ♘xd4 he played 16 e5, but 16...c5! maintained the balance: if 17 ♘xd4, then 17...♗b7 18 ♘b5 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♗xe5. And the attempt to sharpen the situation with 17 b4!? did not prove justified – 17...cxb4 18 ♕xd4 ♗b7 and Black won in the end.

14...bxa4 15 ♘xc6

Accepting the challenge, although, contrary to the opinion of both players, 15 b3 was also quite possible: 15...♘e5 16 ♗e7 (16 f3?! d5!) 16...♗xg4 17 f3 ♖fe8 18 ♗xd6 ♖ad8 19 c5 ♗c8 (but not 19...♘d3? 20 ♘xc6!) with very unclear play. 'Only here did Smyslov begin playing more slowly – it was not hard to conclude that everything preceding had been planned by him in his home analysis.' (Botvinnik)

15...♕xc6 16 e5 ♕xc4 17 ♗xa8 ♘xe5

Black has excellent compensation for the exchange: White's pawns are vulnerable, his pieces scattered, and his king's shelter weakened.

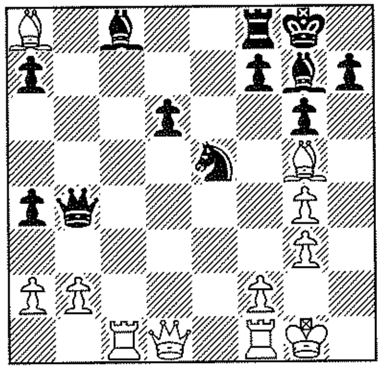


18 ♖c1

'If 18 ♕xd6, then 18...♕xg4 with dangerous threats' (Smyslov), although after 19 ♗f6! I do not see anything dangerous. Therefore it is better to play Botvinnik's suggestion of 18...♗e6! 19 ♗g2 ♕xg4 with a good game. The occupation of the d5-square is also unfavourable: 18 ♕d5 ♗e6 (18...♕xg4!?), 18 ♗d5 ♕b5! (with the threat of ...♘d3) or 18 ♗e7 ♗xg4 19 ♗d5 (19 ♕d5 ♖e8! 20 ♗xd6 ♖d8 21 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 and one of the bishops is lost) 19...♕c7 20 f3 ♗xf3 21 ♗xf3 ♕xe7 etc.

18...♕b4

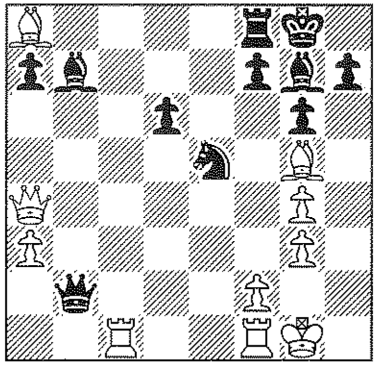
18...♕b5!? also came into consideration – if 19 ♗e7 ♗xg4 20 ♕d5 (Botvinnik), then 20...♕d7! 21 ♗xf8 ♗f3 22 ♗c6 ♕h3 23 ♕xf3 ♘xf3+ 24 ♗xf3 ♔xf8 and Black is the only one with winning chances. Which cannot be said about the variation 18...♕xa2 19 ♗e7 ♗xg4 20 ♗d5! ♕xb2 (but not 20...♗xd1? 21 ♗xa2 ♗e2 22 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 23 ♖c7 ♗xf1 24 ♔xf1 and wins) 21 ♕xa4 ♕d2 22 ♕b3 ♖e8 23 ♖c7 ♕e2! 24 ♗xd6 ♘f3+ 25 ♗xf3 ♕xf3 26 ♕xf3 ♗xf3 with equality.



19 a3!

'Best. All the same the b2-pawn is doomed and it is very important for White to eliminate the strong a4-pawn.' (Botvinnik) Smyslov agrees with this and, after a strict examination, so does the computer, which first studied 19 ♗e7 ♗xg4 20 ♗xd6 ♕b6 21 ♕d5. Here 21...♖d8 is parried by 22 ♗c7 ♖xd5 23 ♗xb6 ♖d2 24 ♗xa7 ♖xb2 25 a3, but Black has 21...♗f3! 22 ♕c5 ♖xa8 23 ♗xe5 ♕e6! 24 ♕e3 (but not 24 ♗xg7?? ♕h3 with mate, and not 24 ♖c3? ♗b7 25 ♖e3 ♖c8! 26 ♕a5 ♕h3 27 f3 ♖e8 28 ♕e1 ♗a6, winning) 24...♗b7 25 ♖c5 ♕h3 26 f3 ♖e8 27 ♕f4 ♗a6 28 ♖a1 f6! with a powerful attack: 29 ♕xa4 ♖xe5 30 ♕b3+ ♔f8 31 ♖xe5 ♕xg3+ 32 ♔h1 ♕h3+ 33 ♔g1 fxe5 34 ♕a3+ ♔g8 35 ♕xa6 ♕g3+ etc.

19...♕xb2 20 ♕xa4 ♗b7!

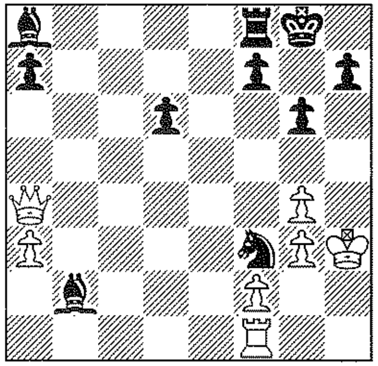


With the exchange of the a8-bishop, the safety of White's king becomes a problem.

21 ♖b1?

An obvious oversight. 'Despite 20 minutes' thought I failed to find the elementary continuation 21 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 22 ♖c3 h6 (22...♘f3+ 23 ♖xf3 ♕xf3 24 ♗e7 ♖c8 25 ♗xd6) 23 ♗f4 ♘f3+ 24 ♖xf3 ♕xf3 25 ♗xd6 ♖d8 26 ♗c5 ♖d5 27 ♗xa7 ♗e5 28 ♖e1 and ♕e4 with a probable draw.' (Botvinnik)

21...♘f3+ 22 ♔h1 ♗xa8! (White was hoping for 22...♕xb1? 23 ♖xb1 ♗xa8 24 ♗e7) **23 ♖xb2 ♘xg5+! 24 ♔h2 ♘f3+ 25 ♔h3 ♗xb2**



Black has more than sufficient compensation for the queen. His four pieces, coordinating splendidly, now launch a swift attack on the defenceless white king.

26 ♕xa7 ♗e4 27 a4 ♔g7 28 ♖d1 ♗e5

28...♘g5+ 29 ♔h2 (29 ♔h4? ♗g2!) 29...h5! 30 gxh5 ♖h8 would also have won (Burgess).

29 ♕e7 ♖c8!

The rook is ready to land the fatal blow. 'Smyslov brilliantly conducts the concluding part of the game.' (Botvinnik)

30 a5 ♖c2 31 ♔g2 ♘d4 32 ♔f1

Or 32 ♔h3 ♖xf2 33 ♖xd4 ♗g2+ 34 ♔h2 (34 ♔h4 ♗f1!) 34...♗xd4 35 ♕xd6 ♗e4+! 36 ♔h3 ♖d2 and wins (Burgess).

32...♗f3 33 ♖b1 ♘c6 0-1

In view of 34 ♕c7 ♗d4 35 ♕xd6 ♖xf2 36 ♔e1 ♖e2+ 37 ♔f1 ♖h2. A fine finish! The score became 7-7.

The dispute in this variation continued in the 24th game, where Botvinnik played **9 h3** (instead of 9 ♗e3) and after **9...a5 10 ♗e3 exd4?!** (10...a4!) **11 ♘xd4 ♖e8** (11...♘c5? 12 e5! dxe5 13 ♘xc6!) **12 ♕c2 ♘c5 13 ♖ad1** (13 ♘b3!? Botvinnik-Szabo, Amsterdam Olympiad 1954) **13...♘fd7 14 ♘b3** (14 ♖d2!?) **14...♕e7** (14...♕c7!?) **15 ♘xc5 dxc5** he could have retained the advantage by 16 ♘a4!

The eighth game of the 1958 return match went **9...♘e8?! 10 ♗g5?!** (10 ♖e1!) **10...f6 11 ♗e3 f5! 12 ♕d2 ♕f6 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♗g5 ♕f7 15 b3 f4 16 dxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♗xf4 ♘xf3+ 18 ♗xf3 ♗xh3** with equality.

Then the King's Indian Defence almost disappeared from Smyslov's repertoire, and only much later, in a game with Bukal (Linz 1980), did he reveal the entire depth of his preparation for the matches with Botvinnik: **9...♕b6 10 ♖e1** (10 d5 – *Game No.128*) **10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘e8!?** For years the best players in the world (including such an expert on the King's Indian as Geller) had been automatically playing 11...♖e8 and experiencing certain difficulties. The novelty

11...♘e8!?, devised by Smyslov back in 1950, abruptly changes the character of the position: wherever the white knight at d4 moves to, Black creates effective counterplay. Therefore nowadays White players have begun trying 10 c5 dxc5 11 dxe5 ♘e8 12 e6!? fxe6 13 ♘g5. Indeed, even Karpov has given preference to this pawn sacrifice. Is this not the highest evaluation of Smyslov's invention?!

Meanwhile, this failure did not depress Botvinnik, and in the very next, 15th game he inflicted a heavy defeat on his opponent, removing his desire to play the Closed Variation of the Sicilian Defence in matches for the world championship.

Game 108

V.Smyslov-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1954, 15th game
Sicilian Defence B25

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3

It is interesting that Smyslov, Spassky and after them Short and many others have also played this set-up as Black against the English Opening, even a tempo down: 1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 d6 etc. But Botvinnik went in for it only with White – 6 e4 etc., with the exception of his classic game with Benko (*Game No.79*).

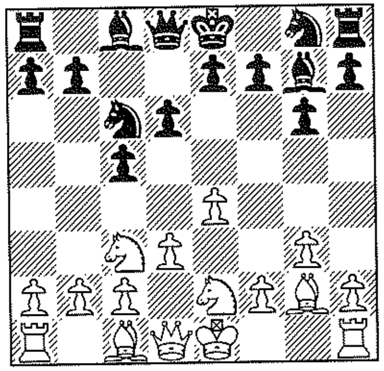
5...d6

The 13th game went 5...b6?! (a surprise!) 6 ♘ge2?! d6 7 0-0 ♗b7 8 f4 f5 and Black, after accurately exploiting his opponent's reckless play, won on the 42nd move. 'Of course, my opponent was expecting 5...e6 followed by ...♘ge7, as I played back in 1936 in Nottingham against Alexander. Incidentally, it was Smyslov who found the antidote to this set-up – 6 ♗e3 ♘d4 7 ♘ce2!, although theory considers that Black equalises by 7...b6 8 c3 ♘xe2.' (Botvinnik)

But after 5...b6?! White could now have played the critical 6 f4 and ♘f3 or 6 ♘h3 (Smyslov-Portisch, Portoroz 4th matchgame 1971).

6 ♘ge2?!

An inaccurate move, which was virtually abandoned after this game: White develops his knight both too early, and on the wrong square. A more topical alternative is 6 ♗e3 and 7 ♕d2 or the more aggressive 6 f4 and if 6...♘f6 or 6...e6 – 7 ♘f3, while if 6...e5 – 7 ♘h3 ♘ge7 8 0-0 with the threat of 9 f5! (details in Volume 3, in the chapter on Spassky – an expert on the Closed Variation).



6...e5!

For those times – a revelation, although Botvinnik clarifies: 'A similar plan, with reversed colours, also occurred earlier in the English Opening, and in particular it was successfully employed for White by Nimzowitsch.'

7 ♘d5

A blank shot. It was more interesting to play 7 0-0 ♘ge7 8 f4 or 8 ♗e3, obtaining a position from the aforementioned Benko-Botvinnik game with reversed colours and an extra tempo.

7...♘ge7 8 c3?!

A risky and unfortunate move. To maintain the balance, White should play 8 ♘xe7, 8 ♘ec3, 8 ♘e3, or even 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗f6 0-0 (Karpov-Adorjan, Groningen 1967/68; Spassky-Christiansen, Linares 1985).

8...♘xd5 (immediately ridding himself of the weakness of the d5-square) **9 exd5 ♘e7 10 0-0**

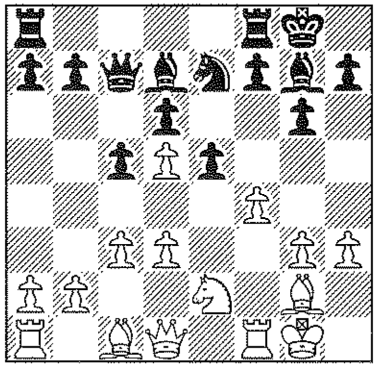
'The variation 10 d4 exd4 11 cxd4 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 0-0! (but not 12...♘xd5?! 13 0-0 ♘e7 14 ♘b5 d5 15 ♗f4) is advantageous to Black: the activity of the bishop at g7 increases sharply.' (Botvinnik) Say, 13 0-0 ♘f5 etc.

Smyslov was probably planning to answer ...f7-f5 with f2-f4, but Botvinnik manages without the advance of his f-pawn. He begins to 'by-pass' the opponent's position, and the knight at e2 proves to be in a far worse position that the knight at e7.

10...0-0 11 f4

'A pseudo-active advance: the f4-pawn restricts the bishop at c1 and the knight at e2. White should nevertheless have risked 11 d4.' (Botvinnik) This was more solid, although in any case Black's position was more pleasant.

11...♗d7 (with the threat of 12...♕c8 and ...♗h3) **12 h3** (both 12 fxe5 dxe5 13 d6 ♘f5 14 ♗xb7 ♖b8 and 12 a4 ♕c8 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 ♗g5 f6 15 ♗c3 ♘f5 16 ♗d2 ♘d6 17 d4 c4 18 a5 ♗h3 etc., are unfavourable for White) **12...♕c7**



13 ♗e3?!

A serious mistake: after the switching of the bishop to f2 the c1-h6 diagonal is weakened. However, I also do not understand Botvinnik's recommendation 13 ♗d2 – this move does not change anything. In my opinion, correct is 13 g4!, maintaining the tension and not allowing the knight to go to f5 (while it stands at e7, Black is restricted and things are not so bad for White), for example: 13...♖ae8 (13...f5 14 g5) 14 ♔h1 with ♘g3 to follow.

13...♖ae8 14 ♕d2?

On this diagonal the queen comes under an X-ray attack by the bishop on h6. It was now too late for 14 g4?! on account of 14...f5 15 g5 e4! (exploiting the position of the bishop at e3). According to Botvinnik '14 ♗f2 was necessary', although here too after 14...h5 the initiative is with Black – White has to solve the problem of his knight at d2: 15 fxe5 (15 ♕d2?! ♘f5) 15...dxe5 16 ♕d2 b6 17 ♖ae1 ♘c8 18 c4 ♘d6 19 ♘c3 f5 20 ♗e3 ♔h7 etc.

14...♘f5 15 ♗f2 h5!

Now Black simply dominates. The knight at e2 is pinned down and White cannot breath.

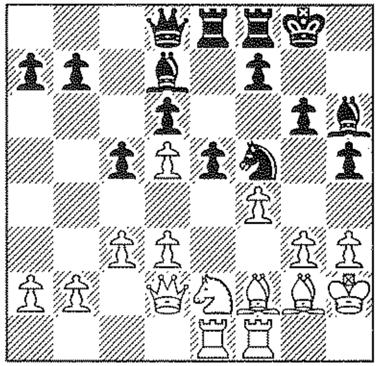
16 ♖ae1?!

'There is no longer time for such moves. While it was not too late, White should have increased the scope for his pieces by 16 g4 hxg4 17 hxg4 ♘h6 18 g5, although at first sight this seems dangerous.' (Botvinnik) And not only at first sight: after 18...♘g4 19 ♗g3 c4! 20 d4 e4 Black has a strong attack.

16...♕d8! 17 ♔h2

17 fxe5? ♗h6! 18 ♕c2 ♘e3 is bad, while if 17 g4? there would have followed 17...hxg4 18 hxg4 ♘h4!, exchanging one of the white bishops and exposing the king.

17...♗h6!



After making just a couple of 'natural' moves (13 ♗e3 and 14 ♕d2), White has ended up in a lost position!

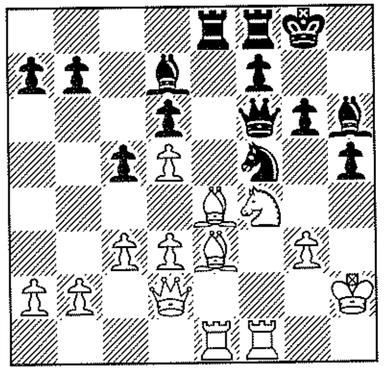
18 h4

'The storm clouds are gathering over White's kingside. He again cannot play 18 g4? in view of 18...hxg4 19 hxg4 ♘h4 20 g5 ♘xg2 21 ♔xg2 exf4 22 gxh6 ♕g5+ 23 ♔h2 ♕xh6+ 24 ♔g1 ♕g5+ 25 ♔h2 ♔g7.' (Botvinnik) Neither of the following variations are suitable: 18 ♗g1? h4! 19 g4 ♘g3, and 18 ♕d1 (or 18 ♕c2?!) 18...exf4 19 ♘xf4 h4! with serious threats.

18...♕f6!

'The decisive move, although it contradicts one of the basic attacking rules – don't advance the queen in front of your minor pieces. Against the threat of 19...exf4 20 ♘xf4 ♘xh4 there is no satisfactory defence.' (Botvinnik)

19 ♗e4 (losing a pawn; if 19 ♗g1 ♘xh4! and wins) **19...exf4 20 ♘xf4 ♘xh4 21 ♗e3 ♘f5**

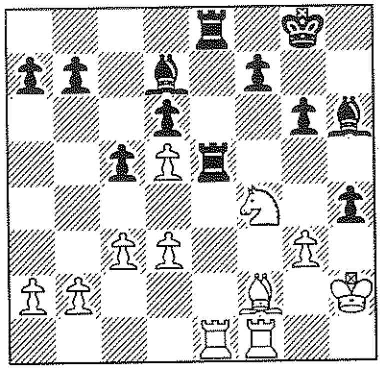


22 ♗xf5

As the main, 'thematic' variation Botvinnik gives 22 ♘xh5 gxh5 23 ♗xf5 (23 ♗xh6 ♕xh6) 23...♗xe3 24 ♖xe3 ♕g5! and White loses the exchange. 24...♗xf5?! is weaker after 25 ♖ef3 ♖e5 26 d4 cxd4 27 cxd4 ♖xd5 28 ♕f2, although even in this case the computer gives a win: 28...h4! 29 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 30 ♕xf5 hxg3+ 31 ♔xg3 ♕xd4.

22...♕xf5 23 ♕g2 (23 ♘e6 ♗xe3! 24 ♕xe3 ♕xd5 was equally hopeless) **23...♕g4 24 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 25 ♖xe2 ♖e5 26 ♖ee1 ♖fe8 27 ♗f2 h4**

Creating two connected passed pawns.



28 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 29 d4 hxg3+ 30 ♔xg3 ♖g5+ 31 ♔h2 ♖f5 32 ♗e3 cxd4 33 cxd4 ♔h7 (with the threat of 34...g5) **34 ♖f2 g5 35 ♘e2 ♖xf2+ 36 ♗xf2 f5 0-1**

Undoubtedly this was one of the decisive games of the match – and also a highly instructive one: when Botvinnik knew a plan, he was irresistible!

In the 16th game Smyslov made an oversight in a sharp, roughly equal position, and the score became 9-7 in the champion's favour. The next three games ended in draws after a tough struggle, but beginning with the 20th game, as in the match with Bronstein, Botvinnik clearly became tired and Smyslov regained two points in the latter stages.

Many were surprised by the quick draw in the concluding game. 'It should not be forgotten that every chess event includes two factors: creative and competitive,' explained Botvinnik. 'Since the first 23 games had concluded with a score of 11½-11½, and thus I had not managed to surpass my opponent – we had demonstrated that we were roughly equally matched – the final, 24th game had a narrow competitive significance. And when Smyslov, considering his 22nd move, decided, to my great surprise, to offer a draw, renouncing his last hope of becoming world champion, what was I to do? 'Your offer is so tempting,' I replied, 'that I cannot refuse...' This game was the only one where the struggle concluded ahead of time.'

A fighting, entertaining match! The final score – 12-12 (+7 -7 =10) – again enabled Botvinnik to retain the title. Whereas Smyslov, by his own admission, was convinced that he could successfully battle for the chess crown. But for this he first had to win another Candidates tournament.

In early spring 1955 Smyslov defeated Botvinnik in the 22nd USSR Championship and as a result finished half a point ahead of him (sharing 1st-2nd places with Geller). And in the autumn of 1956, now as the challenger, he shared 1st-2nd places with the champion in a major international tournament – the Alekhine Memorial.

The Match of his Life

Thus fate afforded Smyslov a rare opportunity – to compete for the title of world champion a second time. 'This obliged me to battle with the utmost composure and energy,' recalls Vasily Vasilievich. 'The experience of my previous match with Botvinnik proved useful, and I had gained a clear impression of the difficulty of the coming encounter. The very first game of the 1957 match gave me a win and proved to be a good omen.'

This important game showed what form the two players were in. After a modestly played opening Botvinnik spent a lot of time and effort on holding a slightly inferior position and began exchanging pieces, thinking that he would easily gain a draw in the ending. But he incautiously allowed the fixing of his pawns on squares of the 'wrong' colour and in literally five or six moves he lost a seemingly equal endgame.

Game 109

M.Botvinnik-V.Smyslov

World Championship Match,

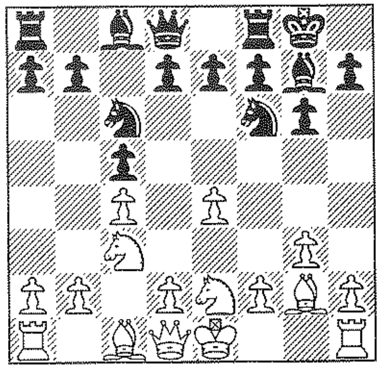
Moscow 1957, 1st game

English Opening A36

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 e4

In the 15th game of the 1954 match (*Game No.108*) Botvinnik went in for this set-up with Black, and now he does so with White. Against both ...e7-e5 and ...c7-c5 he liked to create the pawn wedge c4-d3-e4, not fearing the weakness of the d4-square.

5...c5 (here events develop somewhat differently than with the black pawn on e5) **6 ♘ge2 ♘c6**



7 0-0

In his games with Szabo (Moscow Olympiad 1956) and Taimanov (Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1956) Botvinnik played a2-a3 and b2-b4 before castling. The second of them went 7 a3 ♘e8 8 ♖b1 ♘c7 (8...a5!?) 9 b4 b6 10 d3 ♘e6 11 0-0 ♖b8 12 ♗e3 d6 13 ♕d2 with a slight advantage to White.

7...d6 (7...♘e8!?) **8 a3**

After 8 d3 an accurate plan is 8...♘e8 9 h3 (9 ♗e3 ♘d4!) 9...♘c7 10 a3 (10 f4 f5! or 10 g4 ♘d4 11 f4 f5!, killing White's attack on the kingside) 10...♘e6 11 ♖b1 a5 12 ♔h2 ♖b8 13 f4 ♘ed4 with equality (Taimanov-Tukmakov, Leningrad Interzonal 1973).

8...♗d7

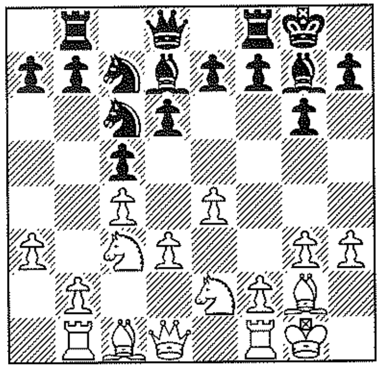
Here too the immediate 8...♘e8 is good, with the idea of 9 ♖b1 a5! (but not 9...♖b8?! 10 b4 Taimanov-Najdorf, Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1956) 10 d3 ♘c7 11 ♗e3 ♘d4! 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 b6 with equality (Evans-Fischer, New York 1966/67).

9 h3

Prophylaxis: White avoids 9 ♖b1 ♕c8! 10 b4 (if 10 ♖e1 there is 10...♘e5 11 d3 ♗g4!) 10...♗h3 11 d3 ♗xg2 12 ♔xg2 b6 with equality.

9...♘e8 10 d3 (10 ♖b1 a5!, and if 11 ♘b5, then 11...♘c7 12 ♘xc7 ♕xc7 13 ♘c3 ♘d4 with equality) **10...♘c7 11 ♖b1 ♖b8**

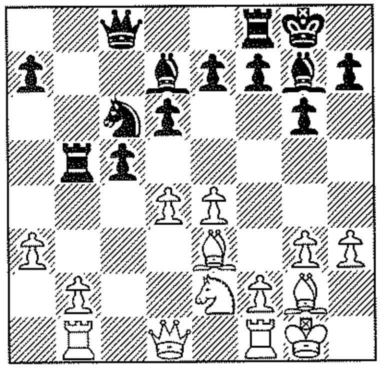
Thanks to his high quality opening preparation, Smyslov has confidently equalised.



12 ♗e3 (12 b4 is now unfavourable in view of 12...cxb4 13 axb4 b5!) **12...b5 13 cxb5**

'White should have gone in for an interesting, although risky pawn sacrifice: 13 d4!? cxd4 (*13...bxc4!? 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 ♗xc5 ♕c8 with a normal game – G.K.*) 14 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 (*14...bxc4 15 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 16 ♕e2 with equality – G.K.*) 15 ♗xd4 bxc4 16 ♗e3, and the presence of the strong dark-squared bishop is sufficient compensation.' (Lilienthal)

13...♘xb5 14 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 15 d4 ♕c8



Also suitable is 15...cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♕xd4 ♕b8 with approximate equality, but why not fight for an advantage?

16 dxc5?!

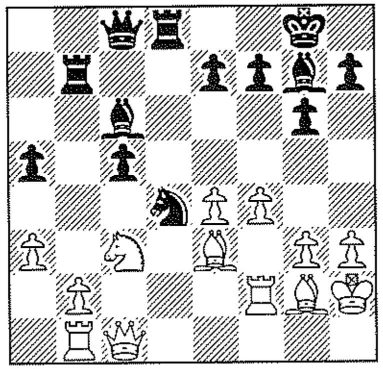
As the commentators unanimously pointed out, the opening of the d-file is to Black's advantage. There was also no sense in 16 d5?! ♘a5 17 ♔h2 ♘c4 or 16 ♘c3?! cxd4! 17 ♘xb5 dxe3 with excellent play for the exchange, so 16 ♔h2! would have been the most solid.

16...dxc5 17 ♔h2 ♖d8 18 ♕c1

White has some problems. Thus the variation 18 ♘c3?! ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♗xh3 20 ♖xb5 ♗xg2 is dangerous for him: 21 ♕xd8+ ♕xd8 22 ♔xg2 ♕d3 23 ♖xc5 ♕xe4+ or 21 ♔xg2 ♖xd1 22 ♖xd1 ♕e6! 23 ♖xc5 (23 f3? ♕c4!) 23...♕xe4+ with good winning chances.

18...♘d4 19 ♘c3 ♖b7 20 f4 ♗c6 (20...♘b3!? 21 ♕e1 ♗d4 came into consideration) **21 ♖f2 a5?!**

21...♘b3! was definitely stronger, and after the queen moves – 22...♗d4 with somewhat the better game.



22 ♕f1!

Botvinnik plays this part of the game very enterprisingly. It only needed the opponent to delay slightly, missing the most active move, and White is ready to seize the initiative.

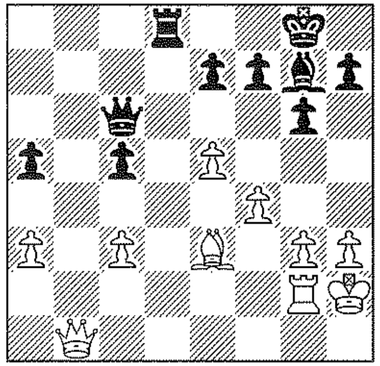
22...♘b5 (22...e5 23 f5!; 22...♕e6 23 ♕a6!?) **23 e5**

Shutting in the g7-bishop and provoking simplification. After the continuation 23 ♗xc5 ♘xc3! (23...♗xc3 24 bxc3 ♘xc3 25 ♖c1 ♗b5 26 ♕e1 ♕xc5 27 ♖xc3 ♕d4 with equality) 24 bxc3 ♗xe4 25 ♖xb7 (25 ♗xe4?! ♖xb1 26 ♕xb1 ♕xc5 is inferior) 25...♗xb7 26 ♗xe7 (26 ♗b6!?) 26...♖e8 27 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 28 ♗c5 ♗xc3 White is fighting only for a draw.

23 ♘xb5!? ♗xb5 (23...♖xb5!?) 24 ♕e1 is more ambitious, and in the event of the crude 24...♗d3 25 ♖c1 c4 26 e5 ♖b5 Black runs into difficulties: 27 a4 ♖b4 28 ♗d2 ♖xa4 29 ♗xa5 ♖e8 30 b3!

23...♘xc3 24 bxc3 ♗xg2 25 ♖xg2 ♖xb1 26 ♕xb1 ♕c6

If 26...c4, then 27 ♕b5! ♖d3 28 ♗d4 is rather unpleasant.



27 ♖d2?

Aiming for exchanges in time-trouble, Botvinnik commits a surprising positional mistake! After 27 c4! White would not have been in any danger and would even have had slightly the better chances, since the opponent is left with chronically weak pawn at c5.

27...♖xd2+ 28 ♗xd2 c4! (now, by contrast, White has a weakness at c3) **29 ♗e3**

29 ♕b8+ ♗f8 30 f5!? gxf5 31 ♗g5 ♔g7 32 ♕d8 was of little benefit, but perhaps it would have given a draw?

29...f6!?

A thematic undermining move, activating the bishop at g7. In Lilienthal's opinion, 'better was 29...h5, and White's position can hardly be defended: 30 ♕b8+ ♗f8 31 h4 e6.' But after 32 a4 with the idea of 33 f5! and ♗h6 (or even the immediate 32 f5!?) no win is apparent.

However, by 30...♔h7! Black would have retained the advantage: 31 h4 ♕e4 32 ♗d4 ♕c2+ 33 ♔h3 ♕c1! 34 ♔g2 ♕xa3, 31 ♕a7 ♕f3 32 h4 ♕e2+ 33 ♗f2 ♕b2, or 31 ♕d8 ♕f3 32 ♕d2 f6! 33 ♗d4 h4 34 ♕g2 hxg3+ 35 ♕xg3 ♕e4 etc.

30 ♗d4 ♔f7 31 ♕d1?!

Too passive! It was necessary to play 31 ♕b8 or 31 exf6 exf6 (after 31...♗xf6 32 ♗xf6 exf6 33 ♕d1 the most probable outcome is a draw) 32 ♕b8, activating the queen and creating counterplay.

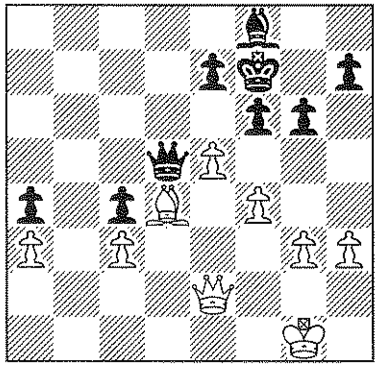
31...a4!

Now almost all the white pawns are fixed on dark squares – the colour of the enemy bishop, and it is not surprising that the game ends fairly quickly.

32 ♕e2

'After 32 h4 Black could have strengthened his position by 32...fxe5 33 fxe5 (33 ♗xe5 ♗f8!) 33...e6 and then ...♗f8.' (Lilienthal) Or 32 exf6 exf6! followed by ...♗f8, and the weakness at a3 is ruinous for White.

32...♕d5 33 ♔g1?! (33 h4 or 33 ♕f2 was recommended as being more tenacious) **33...♗f8!**



34 f5?

Botvinnik makes a desperate attempt at a counterattack in a difficult position. 34 ♕d1 ♕b5 offered little hope, but, according to

Lilienthal, '34 ♕f2 retained possibilities of resisting.'

34...fxe5 35 fxg6+ hxg6 36 ♗xe5 e6 37 ♕f2+ ♔e8 38 ♕f6 (38 ♗d4 e5!) **38...♗xa3 39 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 40 ♕h7+**

After 40 ♕g7+ ♗e7 41 ♗f6 the machine gives 41...♕c5+ 42 ♔g2 a3 43 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 (the flashy 43...♕d5+? 44 ♔f2 a2 leads to an unexpected draw: 45 ♗b4+! ♔c6 46 ♕a7 ♕d2+ 47 ♔f3 ♕d1+ 48 ♔f2 a1♕ 49 ♕c5+ ♔b7 50 ♕b5+ with perpetual check) 44 ♕d4+ ♕d6 and the passed a-pawn is decisive: 45 ♕a7+ (45 ♕xc4? ♕d5+) 45...♔c6 46 ♕a6+ ♔d5 47 ♕b5+ ♕c5 (47...♔e4!? 48 ♕xc4+ ♔e3) or 45 ♕f2 ♕d5+ 46 ♔h2 ♔e8 47 ♕a2 ♕c5 etc.

40...♗e7 (here the game was adjourned) **41 ♗f6 0-1**

The sealed move. White resigned without resuming in view of 41...♕c5+ 42 ♔g2 a3 43 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 44 ♕c2 (44 ♕e4 ♕c5; 44 ♕b1 ♔c8!) 44...♕c5 45 g4 (45 ♕a4+? ♕c6+) 45...♕a5.

An unpleasant defeat, but Botvinnik then displayed his champion's character: after two fighting draws he managed to win both the fourth and fifth games. But beginning from the sixth game the challenger again seized the initiative in the match, which he did not relinquish right to the very finish.

Game 110
V.Smyslov-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1957, 6th game
Grünfeld Defence D98

1 d4 (Smyslov avoids 1 e4 for the only time in the match) **1...♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♗g4**

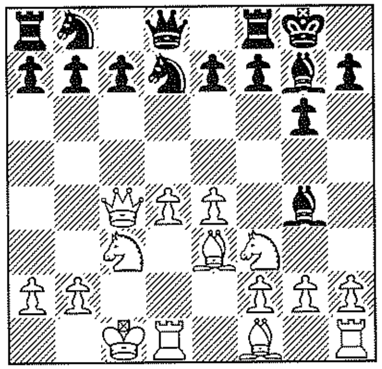
As has already been mentioned, 7...a6 and 7...♘a6 are more in vogue nowadays.

8 ♗e3 ♘fd7

Botvinnik plays... 'à la Smyslov!' This was not a new method for such matches. 'The choice of this system by Botvinnik came as a surprise to me,' writes Vasily Vasilievich. 'Here it is was a psychological calculation that was mainly involved. I had always been willing to uphold this plan of piece development for Black. But now the roles were reversed and I had to find a way of countering my own theoretical weapon.'

9 0-0-0!?

A sharp move, which became popular at the end of the 20th century. White wants to complete his development as quickly as possible, reckoning that Black will be unable to create a dangerous counterattack. The traditional plan is 9 ♕b3 ♘b6 10 ♖d1! (9 a4?! – *Game No.90*) or immediately 10 ♖d1 (*Game No.113*).



9...♘c6

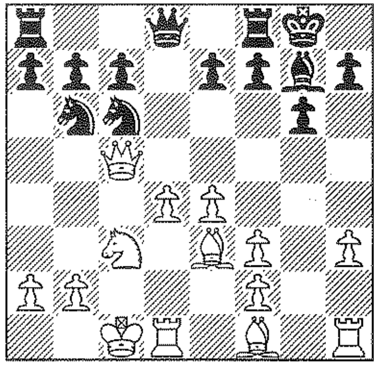
A rather routine reply. According to Smyslov, '9...♘b6 also comes into consideration, to force the white queen to determine its position.' But after 10 ♕c5 ♘8d7 11 ♕g5 ♗xf3 12 gxf3 e5 13 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 14 d5 White retains a slight advantage.

However, 9...c6!? is possible with the idea of ...b7-b5 (Piket-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 1996), and Shirov has also tried 9...c5 10 dxc5 ♕a5 and 9...e5.

10 h3 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♘b6

'11...e5 is unfavourable, since after 12 dxe5 ♘cxe5 13 ♕e2 the threat of 14 f4 promises White the better chances.' (Smyslov)

12 ♕c5



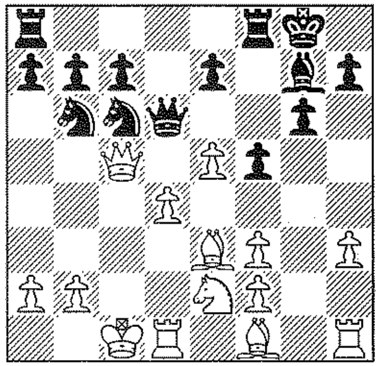
12...f5!

An attempt to create counterplay, otherwise White will play his king to b1, when the two bishops together with his strong centre will ensure him the advantage.

13 ♘e2!

'White parries the unpleasant threat of 13...f4 and supports his pawn centre. I did not want to play 13 d5 ♘e5 14 ♗e2, since after 14...f4 the knight would have occupied an excellent blockading position at e5.' (Smyslov)

13...♕d6 14 e5



14...♕xc5+?

Failing to sense the dynamics of an unfamiliar set-up, Botvinnik immediately commits a decisive mistake. 14...♕e6 15 b3 (15 ♔b1 f4! 16 ♘xf4 ♖xf4 17 ♗xf4 ♕f5+) 15...♕f7 16 ♘f4 e6 17 h4 ♖fd8 was unclear, but the simplest idea was 14...♕d5!, as pointed out by both players, for example: 15 ♕xd5+ ♘xd5 16 f4 e6 17 ♗g2 ♘ce7 with a good game, or 15 ♘c3 ♕xc5 (but not 15...♕xf3? 16 ♗e2 ♕g2 17 ♖dg1 and wins) 16 dxc5 f4! 17 cxb6 fxe3 18 fxe3 ♗xe5 with a roughly equal ending.

15 dxc5 ♘c4 16 f4

'White has gained a clear positional advantage. The black bishop at g7 is shut out of the game, whereas its opponent at g2 has excellent prospects.' (Smyslov)

16...♖fd8 17 ♗g2

Threatening the simple 18 ♗xc6 bxc6 19 ♘d4. Black's attempt to sharpen the play does not help matters.

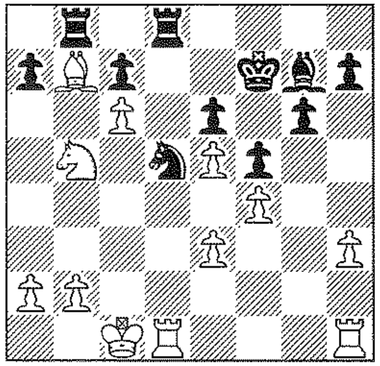
17...♘xe3 18 fxe3 ♘b4 19 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 20 c6!

'The advance of this pawn consolidates White's spatial gains, and in conjunction with the bishop it constitutes a formidable force. White now threatens to play his knight via d4 to e6 or b5, as well as to invade with his rook at d7.' (Smyslov)

20...♔f7

'If 20...♘d3+, then 21 ♔c2 ♘c5 22 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23 ♖d1 ♖b8 24 ♖d7! ♘xd7 25 cxd7 ♖d8 26 ♗c8 c5 27 b4 cxb4 28 ♘d4 and White wins. Or 20...♘xa2+ 21 ♔b1 ♘b4 22 ♖d7 ♘d5 23 ♖d1 winning.' (Smyslov) 22...♖xd7 23 cxd7 ♖d8 24 e6 is no better.

21 ♘d4 e6 22 ♘b5 ♘d5



23 ♖xd5!

'A logical combinative blow! This exchange sacrifice is the quickest way to win, since after the loss of the c7-pawn Black's position collapses.' (Smyslov)

23...exd5 (or 23...♖xd5 24 ♘xc7 ♖c5+ 25 ♔b1 with the decisive threat of ♘a6) **24 ♘xc7 ♖dc8 25 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♘xd5 ♖xc6+ 27 ♔d2 ♔e6 28 ♘c3 1-0**

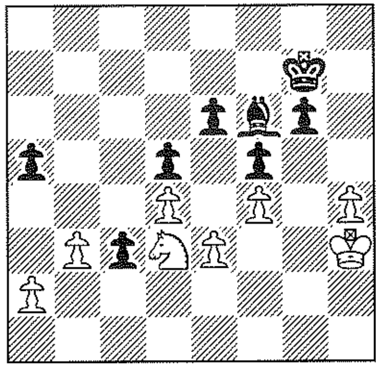
A short duel with a major implication – the dismal outcome of an opening experiment! The Grünfeld Defence let Botvinnik down in both the 1958 return match (*Game No.113*) and the 1963 match, where he lost the highly important 15th game (we will analyse it in Volume 3, in the chapter on Petrosian). It would appear that he was unaccustomed to the dynamics of these positions and that they were excessively complicated for him.

After wins in the eighth and 12th games the challenger was confidently ahead. However, it was a very difficult struggle: although objectively Smyslov was already superior to his historic opponent, Botvinnik fought to the last, as always, despite exhausting time-trouble problems. By winning the 13th game, he reduced the deficit to the minimum. There followed three draws, and in the 15th game, as also earlier in the ninth, the champion missed some real winning chances. Such wounds do not heal quickly...

The tension in the match reached its height: 8½-7½ – only 'plus one' and eight games to go! It appeared that the real battle for the throne was only just beginning: after all, in the 1954 match 'distortions' of as many as three points had occurred first with one side, and then the other. But on this occasion Botvinnik lacked his usual fighting spirit, and it was the 17th and 18th games that were to prove decisive, or more precisely – their events during the adjournment session.

In the 17th game there was a quiet opening – a symmetrical Grünfeld. Playing Black, Smyslov gradually seized the initiative and achieved a marked advantage, but by an old force of habit he was tempted to transpose into a slightly better endgame. In a time scramble he hurried to create a passed pawn, but merely achieved a very interesting adjourned position with some winning chances.

Game 111
M.Botvinnik-V.Smyslov
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1957, 17th game



41 ♘e1?!

White in turn is over-hasty just before the adjournment. 41 b4 axb4 42 ♘xb4 ♔h6 43 a4 ♗d8 44 ♘c2 would have immediately solved his defensive problems.

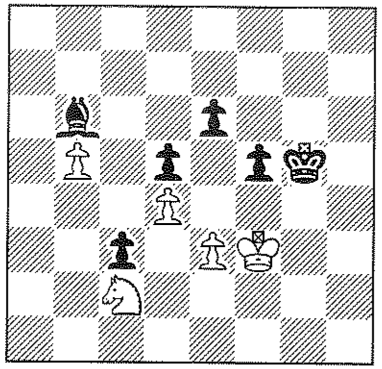
'The game was adjourned and the following morning Goldberg, Botvinnik's second, sent me an offer of a draw,' recalls Smyslov. 'The b3-pawn and the knight at c2 create a defensive line which the black king is unable to cross. However, Black has a plan of penetrating with his king to the queenside, using zugzwang motifs, via the first rank. And so the game continued.'

41...♔h6 (the sealed move) **42 ♘c2 ♗e7 43 ♔g3?**

A fatal error. The subtle point of the position is that if White succeeds in exchanging the a-pawns before the fall of the h4-pawn, he draws, but if not – he loses.

By 43 a3! ♔h5 44 b4 he would have forced the exchange of the black a-pawn, since there is no time for 44...a4 on account of 45 b5 ♗d8 (45...♗xh4? 46 b6 ♗e7 47 b7 ♗d6 48 ♔g2 g5 49 fxg5 ♔xg5 50 ♔f3 ♔f6 51 ♔e2 ♔e7 52 ♘b4 ♔d7 53 ♘a6 c2 54 ♔d2 ♗xa3 55 ♔xc2 ♗d6 56 b8♕ and wins) 46 ♘b4 with a draw (again 46...♗xh4? is bad: 47 b6 ♗e7 48 b7 ♗d6 49 ♔g2 g5 50 fxg5 ♔xg5 51 ♔f3, winning).

I tried to find a win after 44...axb4 45 axb4 ♗xh4 46 b5 ♗d8 47 ♔g3 g5 48 fxg5 ♔xg5 49 ♔f3 ♗b6.



Analysis diagram

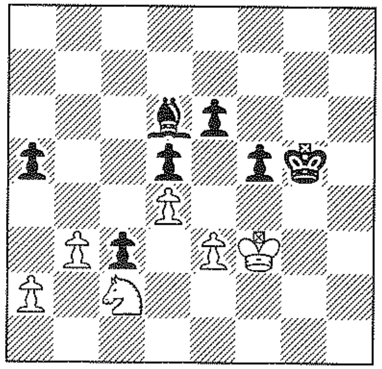
But here White's position has a sufficient reserve of solidity and there is more than one way to draw, as shown in an analysis by Fridstein (*Shakhmatny Vestnik* 1994 No.3):

1) 50 ♘e1 ♔f6, and here White can draw with either 51 ♔e2 (but not 51 ♘c2? e5 52 dxe5+ ♔xe5 53 ♘e1 d4 54 exd4+ ♔xd4 55 ♔f4 ♔c4 56 ♔xf5 ♗f2 57 ♘c2 ♔b3 and wins – Goldberg) 51...f4 52 ♔d3! (52 ♔f3? ♔f5 53 ♘c2 e5! 54 dxe5 fxe3 and wins) 52...fxe3 (Smyslov thought this position was won, but he overlooked a spectacular reply) 53 ♘c2! e5 54 ♘xe3 ♔e6 55 ♘xd5! ♔xd5 56 dxe5 ♗d4 57 b6!, or 51 ♘d3 c2 (51...f4 52 ♔xf4 c2 53 ♔f3 ♔f5 54 ♔e2 ♗a5 55 ♘c1 ♔e4 56 ♘d3 with a draw) 52 ♔e2 ♗a5 (52...f4 53 exf4 ♗xd4 54 ♔d2 ♔f5 55 ♔xc2 ♔e4 56 ♔d2 also draws) 53 ♘c1 e5 54 dxe5+ ♔xe5 55 ♔d3 ♗b6 56 ♘e2! ♗a7! 57 ♘c1 ♔f6 (57...♔d6 58 ♘b3) 58 ♔d2 ♔g5 59 ♘e2 ♔g4 60 ♘d4 f4 (60...c1♕+ 61 ♔xc1 f4 62 ♔d2) 61 ♘xc2 f3 62 ♔e1 ♔g3 63 ♔f1 f2 64 ♘b4;

2) 50 ♘b4!? ♔f6 51 ♔e2 f4 52 exf4 ♗xd4 53 ♔d3 ♗b6 54 ♔xc3 ♔f5 55 ♘d3 ♔e4 56 ♔c2! (56 ♔d2? ♔d4 57 ♘e5 ♗a5+! 58 ♔e2 ♔c5 59 ♘d7+ ♔d6 is inaccurate) 56...♔e3 57 ♘e5 ♔e2 (57...d4 58 ♔d1) 58 ♘d7 ♗c7 (58...d4? 59 ♘xb6 d3+ 60 ♔b2 d2 61 ♘a4) 59 ♘c5 d4 60 ♘d3 with a draw.

It is a surprising fact that in his adjournment analysis Botvinnik did not sense that without the a-pawns the position was a draw, whereas with them on White would lose because of zugzwang. But Smyslov found this deeply concealed zugzwang, noticing details that had escaped his opponent's attention.

43...♔h5 44 ♔f3 ♔xh4 45 ♘e1 g5 46 fxg5 ♔xg5 47 ♘c2 ♗d6

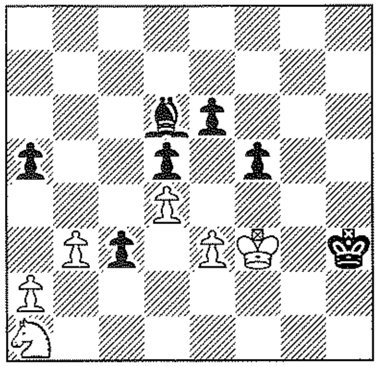


48 ♘e1

'If 48 a3 there could have followed 48...♔h4 49 b4 a4! (*49...axb4?! 50 axb4 ♔g5 51 b5 ♗c7 with a draw – G.K.*) 50 b5 ♗c7 51 ♘e1 ♔g5 52 ♘c2 (52 ♔e2?! ♔g4) 52...♗a5! (52...♔f6 53 ♔e2 ♗d6 54 ♔d3 ♔e7 55 ♔xc3 ♔d7 56 ♘e1 ♗xa3 57 ♘d3! ♔c7 58 ♘f4 ♔b6 59 ♘xe6 ♔xb5 60 ♘c7+ ♔c6 61 ♘e6 ♗d6 62 ♘g7 ♔b5 63 ♘xf5 ♗b4+ 64 ♔c2 ♔c4 65 ♘h6 is unclear) 53 ♘e1 (53 ♔g3 ♔f6) 53...♗b6 54 ♘c2 ♔f6 and the pawns on the a-file improve Black's winning chances.' (Smyslov)

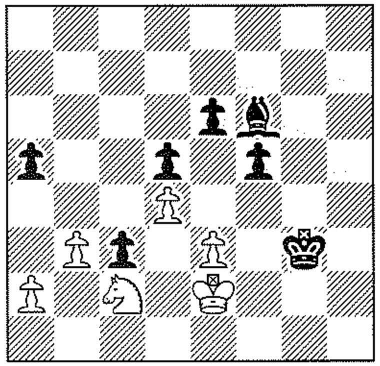
48...♔h4 (beginning a deep and very fine outflanking manoeuvre) **49 ♘c2 ♔h3 50 ♘a1**

If 50 a3 ♔h2 51 ♔f2, then 51...♗e7! 52 b4 a4! (this is stronger than 52...axb4 53 axb4 ♗h4+ 54 ♔f3 ♔g1 55 ♔c2 ♔g2).



50...♔h2 51 ♔f2 ♗g3+ 52 ♔f3 ♗h4! 53 ♘c2 ♔g1 54 ♔e2 ♔g2 55 ♘a1 ♗e7 56 ♘c2 ♔g3 57 ♘e1 ♗d8 58 ♘c2 ♗f6

And it transpires that White is in zugzwang!



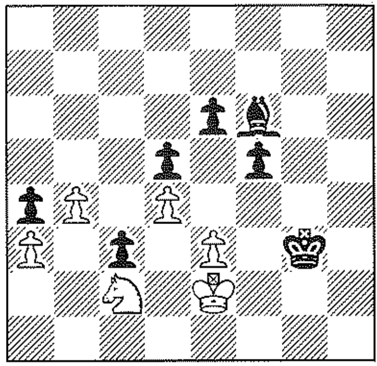
59 a3

'White cannot move his knight due to the threat of ...f5-f4, while if 59 ♔d3, then 59...♔f2 60 ♘a1 ♔e1 61 ♘c2+ ♔d1 62 ♘a1 ♗e7 63 ♘c2 ♗d6 64 ♘a1 ♔c1 65 ♔xc3 ♗b4+ 66 ♔d3 ♔b2 67 ♘c2 ♔xa2 and wins.' (Smyslov) And here neither 60 a3 ♗e7 61 b4 a4! nor 60 ♔xc3 ♔e2 61 a3 e5 62 b4 exd4+ 63 exd4 ♗d8! is any better.

59...♗e7 60 b4

'White also fails to save the game by 60 a4 ♗d6 61 ♘e1 e5 62 dxe5 ♗xe5 63 ♔d3 (63 ♘c2 d4! 64 exd4 ♗d6 65 ♘e3 f4 66 ♘f5+ ♔g4 67 ♘xd6 f3+ and one of the pawns queens) 63...d4! 64 exd4 ♗d6 65 ♘c2 (65 ♔xc3? ♗b4+) 65...f4 66 ♔xc3 f3 67 ♘e3 f2 68 ♔d3 ♔f3 69 ♘f1 ♗f4! 70 d5 ♔g2 71 ♔e2 ♔g1 and Black wins.' (Smyslov)

60...a4! (of course!) **61 ♘e1 ♗g5 62 ♘c2 ♗f6**



63 ♔d3

'White is again in zugzwang. If his knight moves, there follows 63...f4. If 63 b5, then 63...♗d8 64 ♘e1 ♗a5 65 ♘c2 ♔g4! 66 ♘e1 ♗c7 67 ♘c2 (67 ♘d3 c2 68 ♔d2 ♗a5+ 69 ♔xc2 ♔f3 or 67 ♔d3 ♗b6 68 ♔e2 f4 69 exf4 ♗xd4) 67...♗b6! 68 ♘b4 f4 69 exf4 ♗xd4 70 ♔d3 (70 ♘d3 ♔f5 71 ♔f3 ♗b6) 70...♗b6 71 ♔xc3 ♔xf4 72 ♘c6 (72 ♔d3 ♔e5 73 ♘c6+ ♔d6) 72...♔e3 73 ♔b4 d4 74 ♘e5 d3 75 ♔xa4 (75 ♘c4+ ♔d4) 75...d2 76 ♘c4+ ♔e2 77 ♘xd2 ♔xd2 78 ♔b4 e5 79 a4 e4 80 a5 ♗d8 81 b6 e3 and Black wins.' (Smyslov)

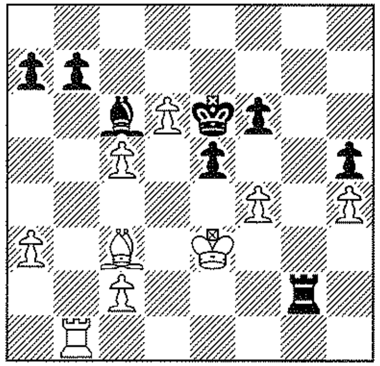
63...♔f2 64 ♘a1 (or 64 ♔xc3 ♔e2 65 b5 ♗d8) **64...♗d8 65 ♘c2 ♗g5 66 b5 ♗d8 67 ♘b4 ♗b6 68 ♘c2 ♗a5 69 ♘b4 ♔e1! 0-1**

Completing the outflanking manoeuvre. White resigned in view of 70 ♘c2+ (70 ♔xc3 ♔e2) 70...♔d1 71 ♘a1 ♔c1 72 ♘c2 ♔b2. A textbook endgame!

This was a serious blow for Botvinnik, who was famed for the skill of his home analysis. I don't know, but perhaps he had some problems with his seconds? The distrustful Mikhail Moiseevich usually preferred to do everything himself, which, in my opinion, was not altogether correct...

The challenger again burst into a two-point lead, but in the next game, the 18th, he found himself in a rather unpleasant ending. Had he lost, the score would again have become only 'plus one' – almost equality! But here the champion suffered another blow, which effectively decided the outcome of the match.

Game 112
V.Smyslov-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match, Moscow 1957, 18th game



32...♖xc2

As Botvinnik explained, 'Black chooses a continuation, such that the c- and f-files remain blocked, and the white rook passive.'

33 ♔d3 ♖g2 34 fxe5 f5!?

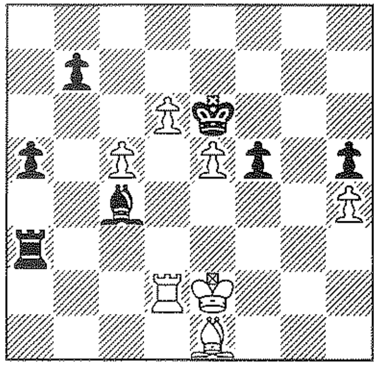
This is a critical moment: the simple 34...fxe5 35 ♖c1 e4+ 36 ♔c4 ♖g4 would also have retained winning chances. However, Mikhail Moiseevich was in time-trouble.

35 ♖b4 ♗e4+ 36 ♔d4 ♖g4 37 ♗e1 (37 ♔e3 ♖xh4 38 ♖d4 ♖h3+ 39 ♔d2 ♗c6 is advantageous to Black) **37...a5 38 ♖b2 ♗d5+ 39 ♔d3 ♖a4 40 ♔e2 ♖xa3 41 ♖d2**

Threatening 42 ♖xd5 or 42 d7.

41...♗c4+

The sealed move. 41...♗c6? was incorrect due to 42 d7! ♗xd7 43 ♖d6+ ♔e7 44 ♗d2 with the initiative for White.



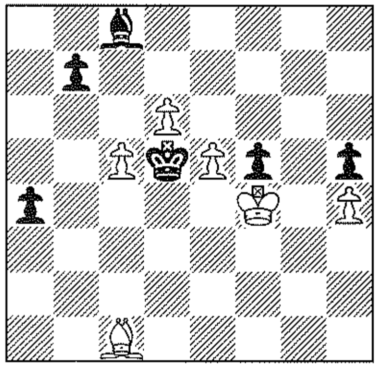
42 ♔f2 ♔d7 43 ♖d4

'During my adjournment analysis I had been afraid of 43 c6+ bxc6 44 ♖b2, but then I established that 44...♗b5 45 ♖d2 (with the threat of 46 e6+) 45...♗d3 or 45...c5 would leave Black real chances of success... To my great surprise, without any particular hesitation Smyslov went in for the exchange of rooks and the endgame with opposite-coloured bishops. Before the resumption I had believed that Black had considerable winning chances here. But during the game – also to my great surprise – it turned out that there were no winning chances.' (Botvinnik)

43...♗b5 44 ♗d2 a4 45 ♗g5!

The threat of 46 e6+ ♔xe6 47 d7 ♗xd7 48 ♖d6+ and 49 ♖xd7 forces the following reply.

45...♖d3 46 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 47 ♗c1 ♗b5 48 ♔e3 ♔e6 49 ♔f4 ♗d7 50 ♗b2 ♔d5 51 ♗a3 ♗c8 52 ♗c1!



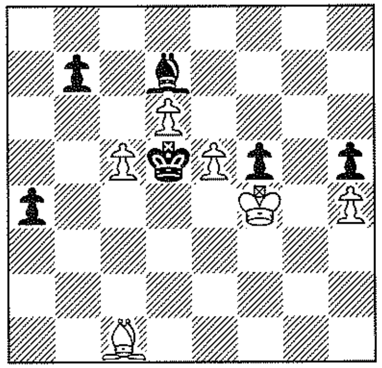
52...♗e6

52...♔xc5?! is dangerous on account of 53 ♔g5, for example: 53...♔d5 54 ♔xh5 ♔xe5 55 ♔g5! ♔xd6 56 h5 ♗e6 57 ♔f6 ♗g8 58 ♔g7 and wins.

53 ♗a3 ♗d7 54 ♗c1 ♔d4

As Botvinnik aptly commented, 'Black's objective is to drive the bishop off the short c1-a3 diagonal, but such that during this time the white king does not manage to come to the aid of its passed pawns.'

55 ♗a3 ♗e6 56 ♗b4 ♗c8 57 ♗a3 ♗e6 58 ♗b4 ♗d7 59 ♗a3 ♗c8 60 ♗c1 ♔d5 61 ♗a3 ♗d7 62 ♗c1 ½-½(?!)



'After lengthy thought and futile searches for a win, Black offered a draw, which was accepted. Meanwhile, his advantage is obvious: the c5- and e5-pawns are weak, the passed d6- and e5- pawns are securely blocked by the black bishop alone, whereas Black's passed a4- and f5- pawns are a real force, since they are on opposite flanks – with opposite-coloured bishops this is very important.' (Botvinnik)

Let us make a critical study of the analyses that were published more than 40 years ago:

62...♗e6 (but not 62...♔xc5?! 63 ♔g5 etc.)

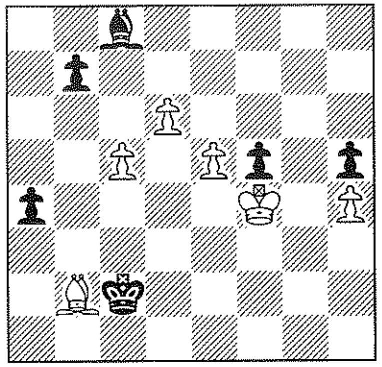
63 ♗a3!

The alternatives are hopeless: 63 ♗d2 a3, 63 ♗b2 ♔xc5 64 ♔g5 ♔d5 65 ♔xh5 f4, or 63 ♔g5 ♔xe5 64 ♔xh5 f4.

63...♗c8 64 ♗c1 ♔d4 65 ♗a3 ♔d3 66 ♗b2

Also possible is 66 ♔g5?! ♔c4 67 ♔f6 ♔d5 68 ♗c1. Here Black wins by 68...♗e6 (68...♔xc5 69 ♔g5!) 69 ♔e7 ♔xe5 70 d7 (*? – G.K.*) 70...♗xd7 71 ♔xd7 f4 72 ♔c7 f3 73 ♗e3 a3, but White has 70 ♗b2+! ♔d5 71 ♗c1 f4 72 ♗xf4 a3 73 ♗c1 a2 74 ♗b2 ♗g4 75 d7 ♗xd7 76 ♔xd7 ♔xc5 77 ♔e6 b5 78 ♔e5 ♔c4 79 ♗a1 with a draw. Therefore the simple 68...♔xc5 is correct, winning.

66...♔c2

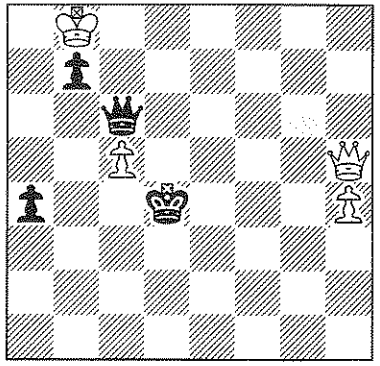


67 ♗a1!

My own discovery, in combination with my 'silicon friend'. Botvinnik thought White would save the game with the 'obligatory' 67 ♗d4 (*? – G.K.*). For example:

1) 67...a3 68 ♔g5 ♔d3 69 ♗a1! ♔e4 70 ♔f6 ♔d5 (70...f4 71 e6 f3 72 d7 ♗xd7 73 exd7 f2 74 ♔e7 f1♕ 75 ♗f6! a2 76 d8♕ ♕xf6+ 77 ♔xf6 a1♕+ 78 ♔g6 with a draw) 71 ♔e7 f4 72 d7 ♗xd7 73 ♔xd7 f3 74 c6!! (74 e6? f2 75 e7 f1♕ 76 e8♕ ♕b5+ 77 ♔d8 ♕xe8+ 78 ♔xe8 ♔xc5 and wins) 74...bxc6 75 e6 f2 76 e7 f1♕ 77 e8♕ ♕xa1 78 ♕e6+ with a study-like draw;

2) 67...♔b3! (67...♔d3 68 ♗b2!) 68 ♔g5 ♔c4 69 ♔f6! (69 ♗b2 ♔d5! is bad for White: 70 ♗c1 ♔xe5, 70 ♔f4 ♔xc5, while if 70 ♔f6 or 70 ♔xh5, then 70...f4) 69...♔d5 70 ♔e7 f4! (70...a3 71 ♗a1!) 71 d7 ♗xd7 72 ♔xd7 ♔xd4 73 e6 f3 74 e7 f2 75 e8♕ f1♕ 76 ♔c7! (76 ♕xh5 a3 77 ♕g4+ ♔c3 and wins) 76...♕a6! (76...♕c4 77 ♔xb7 ♔xc5 78 ♕f8+! ♔b5 79 ♕e8+ ♔a5 80 ♕d8+ ♔b4 81 ♕d6+ ♕c5 82 ♕d2+ ♕c3 83 ♕d6+ ♔b3 84 ♕d1+ ♕c2 85 ♕d5+ with a draw) 77 ♕xh5 ♕c6+ 78 ♔b8.



Analysis diagram

The main variation. Here they all examined only 78...a3 and now:

1) 79 ♕d1+ ♔xc5 80 ♕b3! ♕d6+ 81 ♔a7 ♔d4! (81...♕a6+ 82 ♔b8 a2 83 ♕e3+) 82 ♕xb7? ♕c5+ 83 ♔b8 ♕e5+ 84 ♔a7 ♕a5+ 85 ♔b8 a2 86 ♕b2+ ♔e3 'the black king hides from the checks, and the a2-pawn is bound to queen.' (Botvinnik) Of course, 82 ♕d1+ is better, but even this does not help: 82...♔e5 83 ♕h5+ ♔f4 84 ♕g5+ ♔f3 85 ♕f5+ ♕f4 86 ♕h3+ ♕g3 87 ♕f5+ ♔g2 88 ♕d5+ ♕f3 89 ♕g5+ ♔h3 and wins.

2) 79 ♕h8+! (Euwe's move) 79...♔d3 (or 79...♔xc5 80 ♕c3+ ♔b6 81 ♕b4+! ♕b5 82 ♕d6+) 80 h5 a2 81 ♕a1! (81 h6? ♕h1 82 ♕h7+ ♔c3 83 ♕g7+ ♔b3 84 ♕g3+ ♔b4 85 ♕f4+ ♔b5 and the checks end) 81...♕e8+ 82 ♔c7 ♕f7+ 83 ♔b8 ♕b3 84 ♕f1+! (Konstantinopolsky) 84...♔d4 85 h6 ♕b1 86 ♕f6+ ♔xc5 87 h7 a1♕ 88 h8♕ with a draw.

But after the unexpected 78...b5!! the connected passed pawns decide the outcome in Black's favour (79 cxb6? is not possible in view of 79...♕xb6+ 80 ♔a8 ♕c6+ 81 ♔b8 ♕d6+).

67...a3 68 ♔g5 a2 69 ♗d4! This is the whole point; the analysts gave only the ruinous 69 ♔f6? f4 70 e6 f3 71 d7 ♗xd7 72 exd7 f2 73 d8♕ f1♕+ 74 ♔g5 ♕xa1 and wins.

69...♔d3 70 ♗a1 ♔e4 71 ♔f6 and White achieves a draw after both 71...f4 72 e6 f3 73 d7 ♗xd7 74 exd7 f2 75 d8♕ f1♕+ 76 ♔e6 ♕xa1 77 ♕d5+ ♔e3 78 ♕g5+ ♔f2 79 ♕f4+, and 71...♔d5 72 ♔e7 f4 73 d7 ♗xd7 74 ♔xd7 f3 75 c6! bxc6 76 e6 f2 77 e7 f1♕ 78 e8♕ ♕xa1 79 ♕e6+ ♔c5 80 ♕xc6+.

However, Smyslov would have had to find all this at the board... Botvinnik was extremely vexed: 'In the decisive, 18th game of the 1957 match I was "fortunate" enough to offer a draw in a position where Black had considerable winning chances – probably the only instance in the history of the battle for the world championship! (*alas, this has also happened with other champions, and on more than one occasion – G.K.*). After this "shock" I was unable to play the remaining games at full power and the match quickly ended in my defeat. I sensed at the time that I had incorrectly evaluated the position, and that it was in positional evaluation that Smyslov had achieved superiority...'

Thus, by winning the 'match of his life' with a score of 12½-9½ (+6 -3 =13), Smyslov became the seventh world chess champion in history. Had the previous FIDE rules been in force, he would have been on the throne for a minimum of three years, and in 1960 a unique match-tournament of three could have occurred: Smyslov – Tal – Botvinnik. But instead of this, return matches had been introduced, and Smyslov had to play Botvinnik again in the spring of 1958.

I know for myself how hard it is, on becoming champion, immediately to have to tune up for a new battle: you involuntarily feel that the main tests are behind... Meanwhile, the battle-hardened ex-champion prepared for the coming match with all his might, since 'after an analysis of the 1957 match, of course, I decided that the return match should take place.'

Before the start a disagreement between the participants unexpectedly arose, and Botvinnik did not fail to win this psychological mini-duel. The point was that in his previous matches (1951, 1954 and 1957) he had been very annoyed by the cries and applause of the spectators, who largely supported his opponents, and by the fact that in addition the latter had many highly qualified helpers. And before the start of the return match the chief arbiter, grandmaster Stahlberg (who, incidentally, refereed six matches for the world championship!) announced the following decision of the FIDE President:

1. The match arbiter should inspect the playing venue and satisfy himself that it is in accordance with the rules of the event. If the arbiter concludes that the spectators in the hall are behaving noisily and are disturbing the players, he may transfer the play to a closed room behind the stage.

2. Since one participant (Botvinnik – G.K.) insists that, in accordance with FIDE rules, only one second should give help in the analysis of unfinished games, he (the President) is unable to satisfy the request of the second participant (Smyslov – G.K.) for a second helper.

Yet in the post-war matches for the world crown there was always effectively more than one helper! In the 1951 match, Botvinnik's second was Ragozin (who was also... FIDE vice-president!), but his team also included Flohr and Goldberg; Bronstein's second was Konstantinopolsky, but he also had Boleslavsky and Furman. In the 1954 match Botvinnik was *officially* seconded by Kan, and Smyslov by Simagin. And in the 1957 and 1958 matches the *official* seconds were: for Botvinnik – Goldberg (although in the first of these matches Averbakh also helped – just in the analysis of unfinished games!), and for Smyslov – Bondarevsky (although for all these years both Simagin and Vladimir Makogonov also helped).

Therefore the request of the current world champion was in principle well-founded and logical, but a whole era was to pass before FIDE, beginning with the Karpov-Korchnoi match (Baguio 1978) allowed the participants to have two *official* seconds. But in the 1961 and 1963 matches Botvinnik declined to use even one...

Grandmaster Vladimir Makogonov, who was part of Smyslov's team, told me many years later that he had warned Vasily Vasilievich: 'Botvinnik may play the Caro-Kann!' But the latter merely dismissed this with a wave of his hand – and he began the return match with three losses, two of which were earned with White precisely against the Caro-Kann (*Game No.72*).

After achieving a fine start, somewhere around the seventh game Botvinnik began playing, as he put it, with the utmost caution, for a draw: 'The opponent needs to try and retrieve his losses – he will inevitably lose his composure and begin to "fray"; then – don't blunder! With such a formidable opponent as the 1958 model Smyslov, these were the only possible tactics.'

After ten games the champion was still losing by 'minus three', but a small ray of hope was provided by his win in the 11th game.

Game 113

V.Smyslov-M.Botvinnik

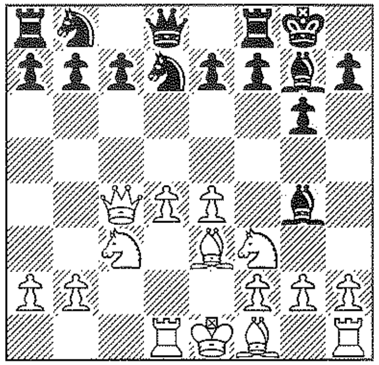
World Championship Return Match,
Moscow 1958, 11th game
Grünfeld Defence D99

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♗g4 (7...a6; 7...♘a6) **8 ♗e3 ♘fd7**

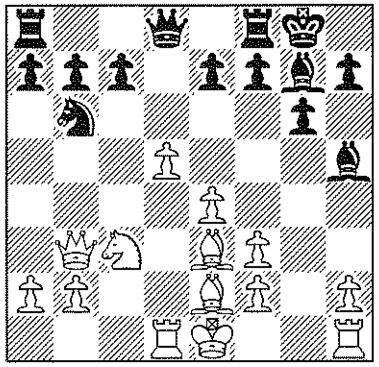
'Again, as in the sixth game of the 1957 match, an interesting psychological situation has arisen. For the second time Botvinnik as Black employs my plan of piece development, presenting me with a strong pawn centre and inviting me to uphold the classical principles of opening strategy.' (Smyslov)

9 ♖d1

Avoiding 9 0-0-0!? (*Game No.110*). 'I preferred to defer the theoretical argument to another time. Thus match tactics sometimes influence the choice of this or that continuation.' (Smyslov)



9...♘b6 (9...♘c6!?) **10 ♕b3 ♘c6** (10...e5 11 dxe5 ♘8d7 12 ♗e2 ♕e7 has also been played) **11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 13 gxf3 ♗h5**



A popular position at that time!

14 h4!?

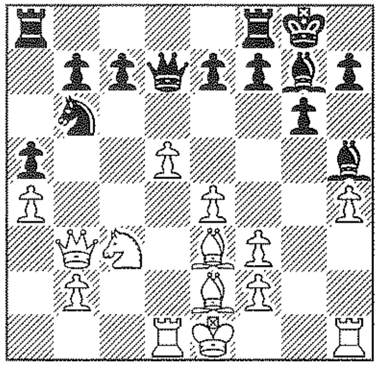
'White normally aims for an attack on the kingside by f3-f4 and h2-h4. Black's chances are associated with ...c7-c6, after which the d-file is opened and the position of the white king in the centre may tell.' (Smyslov) For example: 14 f4 (14 ♖g1!?) 14...♗xe2 15 ♘xe2 ♕d7 16 h4 c6 etc.

14...♕d7 15 a4!?

'An original idea – that of playing on both wings, while leaving the black bishop shut out on h5.' (Smyslov)

15...a5

It is dangerous to play 15...♗xc3+?! 16 bxc3 ♕xa4 17 ♕xa4 ♘xa4 18 ♔d2, leading to 'an endgame that is advantageous for White: he has the two bishops and strong central pawns,' according to Smyslov.



16 ♘b5 (threatening ♘xc7) **16...♘c8 17 ♗d4**

'Perfectly consistent, since with the exchange of the dark-squared bishops the position of the black king is more vulnerable.' (Smyslov) It would appear that this plan of attack also caught Botvinnik unawares...

17...♘d6?

A serious positional mistake: here the knight is misplaced! The correct continuation was 17...♗xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♘b6!, after which Smyslov was intending 19 ♗b5 ♕d6 20 ♖g1, 'retaining attacking chances'. However, these chances are rather slight.

18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♘d4!

Hindering the undermining moves ...c7-c6 and ...e7-e6. Now Black is too late in creating counterplay. There was no point in 19 ♕c3+ ♔g8 20 ♕xc7?! in view of 20...♕xc7 21 ♘xc7 ♖ac8 22 ♘b5 ♘xb5 23 axb5 ♖c2 with equality.

19...♔g8 (19...c6?! 20 ♕c3 ♔g8 21 dxc6 bxc6 22 ♕xc6 would have led to the loss of a pawn) **20 ♖g1**

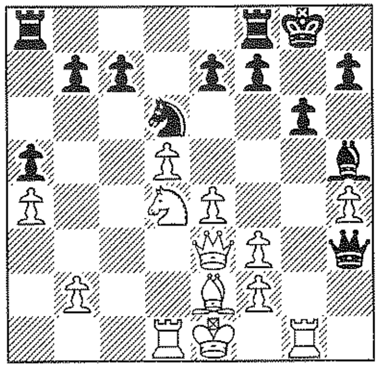
The most energetic!

20...♕h3?!

This ruinous queen sortie is a desperate attempt to complicate the situation. After the normal 20...c5 (20...c6) 21 dxc6 bxc6 22 ♕c3! (Smyslov) or 22 ♘f5!? ♔h8 23 ♘g3 White has a strong attack.

21 ♕e3!

With the unequivocal threat of ♕g5.



21...c5?

'This move loses without a fight. The natural reply was 21...♕xh4, and if 22 ♕h6 e5, but, as shown by Konstantinopolsky, White would have won prettily by 23 dxe6 fxe6 24 ♘xe6 ♖f7 25 ♘g5 ♖e7 26 ♖xd6 cxd6 (or 26...♕h2 27 ♖xg6+! ♔h8 28 ♘e6) 27 ♗c4+ ♔h8 28 ♗f7!! ♖xf7 29 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 30 ♘g5 with crushing threats.' (Smyslov)

However, after 22 ♕h6 the move 22...♕h2!? (instead of 22...e5?) is not altogether clear after 23 ♖g3 ♕h1+ 24 ♔d2 ♕h4. Therefore I prefer 22 e5! ♘c8 23 ♕h6 ♕h2 24 ♖g3 f5 25 ♘e6 ♖f7 26 f4 ♕h1+ 27 ♔d2 ♕xd5+ 28 ♖d3 and wins.

22 dxc6 bxc6 23 ♕g5! c5 (or 23...♔h8 24 ♕xe7 ♖ad8 25 ♕f6+ ♔g8 26 ♘xc6) **24 ♘c6 1-0**

Alas, after this Smyslov lost the 12th and 14th games. 'The world champion lost his mental equilibrium – my cautious tactics bore fruit,' writes Botvinnik. 'In the 15th game Smyslov chose a risky opening, and the adjourned position was completely lost for him. I could have increased my lead to 10-5, but 'in my joy' I neglected my analysis, made an oversight at the start of the adjournment session, and on the 55th move (still in a winning position!) I forgot about the clock and overstepped the time limit!'

However, this quirk of fate merely delayed the inevitable: Smyslov lost the 18th game, and although he then reduced the deficit, he was unable to hold on to the throne.

'While giving my skilful opponent his due, and he prepared very thoroughly for the return match, to a considerable extent I associate my failure with the unsatisfactory state of my health: during the match I went down with the flu, and I finished the event with... pneumonia,' writes Vasily Vasilievich. 'Even so, I have no reason to complain of my fate: I fulfilled my dream and became world champion.'

Without wishing to cast doubts on the reference of Smyslov, and later of Tal, to illness and indifferent health (they certainly were indeed ill), I should nevertheless mention an obvious fact: neither was able to prepare normally. Petrosian called this 'moral disarmament': after their convincing victories they perceived the need to cross swords again with Botvinnik as a vexing misunderstanding.

'I have the feeling that all my life I have been playing only against Botvinnik,' Smyslov sighed sadly at the conclusion of the return match, and 20 years later he added: 'I am happy to have played almost a hundred games with such a remarkable player. We were both in our prime, and I think that the creative results of our meetings played a far from minor role in the development of chess thinking.'

Indeed, they played against each other a record number of games – 69 in three world championship matches (+18 -17 =34 in Smyslov's favour), and 98 in total, including two training matches in 1951 (+27 -21 =50 in Botvinnik's favour). These records were broken only many years later in my endless battles with Karpov.

In Search of Harmony

After his severe match experiences Smyslov was no longer quite 'the same'. In the 1959 Candidates tournament he was unable to compete with Tal and Keres, who played brilliantly. Moreover, by losing to the young Fischer (with White!) in the last round, he conceded his 'rightful' third place to Petrosian. The ex-champion had to begin the next world championship cycle from the Zonal, 28th USSR Championship (Moscow 1961). Alas, there were only four qualifying places, and the number seeking them was far greater: 1. Petrosian, 2. Korchnoi, 3-4. Geller and Stein, 5-6. Smyslov and Spassky etc.

But then to the next Interzonal tournament (Amsterdam, May-June 1964) Vasily Vasilievich was admitted without having to qualify. True, this was not at the discretion of FIDE or the Soviet Chess Federation, but by the direct instructions of the Communist Party's Central Committee, where Smyslov had some highly placed patrons (as, however, did Botvinnik in his time, and later also other Soviet Champions). That year the USSR Zonal was scheduled as a double-cycle eight-player tournament, in which a place was reserved for Smyslov. But... 'A couple of days before the start the match-tournament of eight was unexpectedly changed to a match-tournament of seven,' writes grandmaster Bondarevsky. 'The point is that by a decision of our authorities ex-world champion Smyslov has been included in the Interzonal tournament as one of those places that have been allotted to Soviet players... The reduction in the number of qualifying places from four to three undoubtedly added additional tension to the competitive situation.' Spassky, Bronstein and Stein came through this severe qualifier, but Korchnoi and Geller were left overboard...

In the Interzonal Smyslov relived the good old days, going through the marathon distance undefeated and sharing first place with Spassky, Tal and Larsen – 17 out of 23. But in the first Candidates match he lost to a difficult opponent – Geller, who had been admitted into this cycle instead of Botvinnik (cf. p.313).

From that time Vasily Vasilievich did not qualify for the Candidates for a further 18 years, although he finished fairly high up in the Interzonals: 7th-8th (1970), 5th (1973) and 5th-7th (1976). For the former he qualified from the very strong Zonal, the 37th USSR Championship (Moscow 1969): 1-2. Petrosian and Polugayevsky – 14 out of 22; 3-5. Geller, Smyslov and Taimanov – 13½), and to the other two he was invited from the personal FIDE list. Moreover, in 1976 it again required instructions from the higher authorities, that the Soviet Chess Federation should replace grandmaster Gennady Kuzmin with the renowned ex-world champion... In the next cycle Smyslov had to start from the 1978 Zonal tournament, where he shared only 7th-10th places (Kuzmin, by contrast, qualified for the Interzonal, but only scored '+1' there).

Throughout this time Smyslov played almost continuously, for the most part in international events – seeing as, in contrast to a number of well-known Soviet grandmasters, Vasily Vasilievich had no problems with travelling abroad. 'The career of a chess player is tournaments, tournaments, tournaments... I continue to be excited in chess by the amazing world of ideas and beauty,' he wrote years later. 'For me chess aesthetics signify, most of all, the correctness of an idea, its truth, revealed in clear logic of thought. Beauty manifests itself not only in combinative play with spectacular sacrifices, but also in a seemingly simple position, when the richness of its content is suddenly discovered.'

In his book of best games, he gives the following game as an example of an unexpected combination. It was played in the autumn of 1964 at the Capablanca Memorial tournament in Havana: 1-2. Smyslov and Uhlmann – 16 out of 21 (both undefeated); 3. Taimanov – 15½; 4. Evans – 14; 5. Portisch – 14 etc.

Game 114

K.Bielicki-V.Smyslov

Capablanca Memorial Tournament,
Havana 1964
English Opening A28

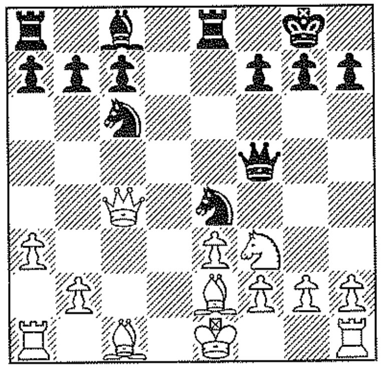
1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 e3 ♗b4

5 ♕c2 0-0 (nowadays they usually play 5...♗xc3!? 6 ♕xc3 ♕e7, avoiding ♘d5)

6 a3?!

According to modern theory, stronger is 6 ♘d5! ♖e8 7 ♕f5! d6 8 ♘xf6+ gxf6!? (8...♕xf6 is too depressing) 9 ♕h5 d5. Once, in search of complications, I provoked this sharp variation in a game with Ehlvest (Reykjavik 1988), but he restricted himself to the passive 6 d3?! and after 6...♖e8 7 ♗d2 ♗xc3 8 ♗xc3 d5 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗e2 ♗f5! 11 ♖d1 a5 12 0-0 ♕e7 13 a3 a4 14 ♗e1?! ♗g6 15 ♕c4 ♖ad8 16 ♘d2? ♘d4! 17 exd4 ♘f4 he soon resigned.

6...♗xc3 7 ♕xc3 ♖e8 (compared with 5...♗xc3 Black has an extra tempo, and his lead in development more than compensates for White's two bishops) **8 d3 d5 9 cxd5 ♕xd5** (9...♘xd5!? looks good) **10 ♗e2 e4 11 dxe4 ♘xe4 12 ♕c4 ♕f5!?** (12...♗e6 with equality)



13 0-0 ♗e6 14 ♕c2 ♗d5 15 b4 ♕e6 16 ♗b2

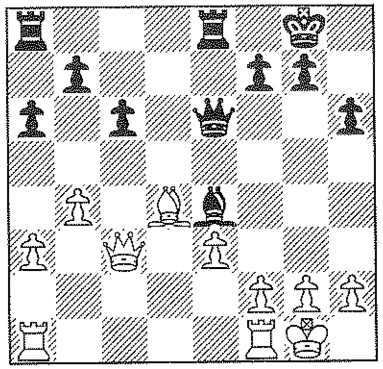
Playing on general grounds, Black has not achieved anything in particular, and White could now have fought for the initiative by 16 b5!? ♘a5 17 ♘d4 ♕d7 18 f3 ♘d6 19 ♗d3 h6 20 ♖d1 ♗c4 21 ♖b1 ♗xd3 22 ♖xd3.

16...a6 17 ♘d4 ♘xd4 18 ♗xd4 c6 19 ♗d3

19 f3 ♘d6 20 e4?! was inaccurate in view of 20...♘xe4! 21 ♗d3 (21 fxe4? ♕xc4) 21...♘f6 22 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 23 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 with some advantage to Black.

19...h6 20 ♗xe4?! (according to Smyslov, '20 f3 ♘d6 21 e4 ♗c4 would not have brought any benefit,' but even so this position is more pleasant for White) **20...♗xe4 21 ♕c3**

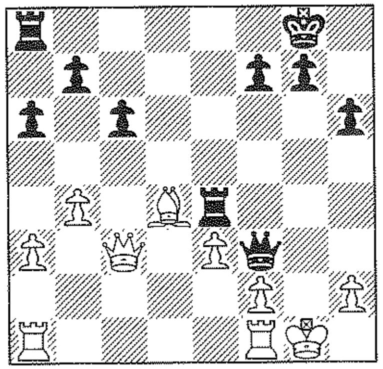
It would appear that Smyslov was wrong to attach a question mark to this move and to suggest 21 ♕d1 ♕g6 22 f3 with equality. After all, it wasn't for this that White captured on e4...



21...♗xg2!?

'This bishop sacrifice, destroying the white king's pawn screen, is fairly obvious, but the following attack is not without its elegant points.' (Smyslov) However, you only need to switch on the computer to see that everything here is not so obvious.

22 ♔xg2 ♕g4+ 23 ♔h1 ♕f3+ 24 ♔g1 ♖e4!

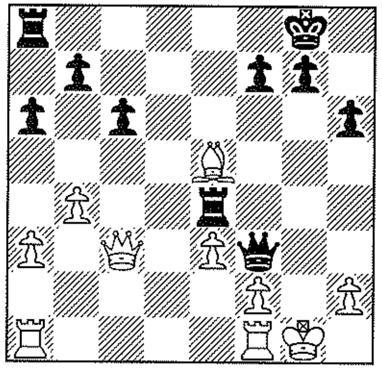


25 ♗e5?

Bielicki is unable to cope with the sudden change of scene! Smyslov gives the variation 25 ♖fd1 ♖d8 26 ♔f1 (26 ♕c2?! ♖g4+ 27 ♔f1 ♖dxd4! 28 exd4 ♖e4 29 ♔g1 ♖e2 etc.) 26...♖h4 27 ♔e1 (*? – G.K.*) 27...♖xh2 28 ♔d2 (28 ♕b2 b6! 29 ♕e2 ♕e4 30 ♖ac1 c5 31 bxc5 bxc5 32 ♖xc5 ♖h1+ 33 ♔d2 ♖xd4+!) 28...♕xf2+ 29 ♔c1 b6 30 ♖b1 c5 31 bxc5 bxc5 32 ♖b2 (32 ♕xc5 ♖xd4!) 32...♕xb2+ 33 ♕xb2 ♖xb2 34 ♗xb2 ♖xd1+ 35 ♔xd1 f6 36 ♔e2 ♔f7 'with a probable draw', overlooking the deadly 28...♖xd4+!

Of course, it is better to play 27 e4! ♕h1+ 28 ♔e2 ♕xe4+ 29 ♗e3 ♕g4+ 30 ♔e1 ♕g1+ with a repetition of moves, since 30...♖e8 31 ♖d3 ♖xh2 32 ♔d2! is unfavourable for Black. In addition, a move earlier 26 ♖d2!? ♖d5 27 ♔f1 is possible, for example: 27...♖g5 28 ♖c2 ♖eg4 29 ♔e1 or 27...♖h5 28 ♗xg7 ♖xh2 29 ♖d8+ ♔h7 30 ♖h8+ ♔g6 31 ♖xh6+ ♖xh6 32 ♗xh6 ♔xh6 33 ♕h8+ ♔g6 with a draw.

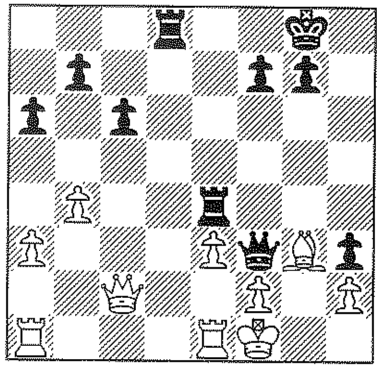
Therefore after 25 ♖fd1! Fritz considers 25...♖g4+ 26 ♔f1 ♖g2, but then after 27 ♕b2 ♖xh2 28 ♔e1 ♖h1+ 29 ♔d2 ♕xf2+ 30 ♔c3 ♕xb2+ 31 ♔xb2 ♖xd1 32 ♖xd1 ♖d8 all three results are possible. Whereas now the game concludes swiftly in Black's favour.



25...h5! 26 ♖fe1

26 ♖fd1 no longer helps in view of 26...♖e8 27 ♗d6 (27 ♗g3 h4) 27...h4 28 ♕d3 ♖g4+ 29 ♗g3 (or 29 ♔f1 ♖g2 30 ♖a2 h3) 29...hxg3 30 hxg3 ♖xe3 and wins.

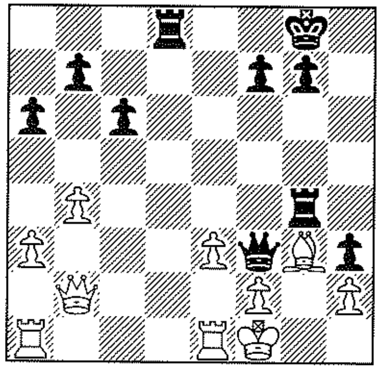
26...♖d8! 27 ♗g3 h4 28 ♕c2 h3! 29 ♔f1



29...♖c4!!

A highly spectacular diversion: 30 ♕xc4 ♖d2 and mate. The immediate 29...♖g4? is incorrect on account of 30 ♖ed1.

30 ♕b2 ♖g4! 0-1



There is the irresistible threat of 31...♖xg3 32 hxg3 h2 (if 31 ♗e5, then 31...♖g1+!).

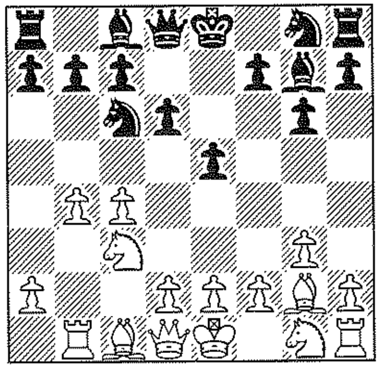
A year later Smyslov repeated his victory in the 1965 Capablanca Memorial, one of the memorable tournaments in his career: 1. Smyslov – 15½ out of 21; 2-4. Fischer (who played by telephone from New York), Geller, and Ivkov – 15; 5. Kholmov – 14½; 6. Pachman – 13; 7. Donner – 12½ etc.

It is customary to regard Smyslov as a deep strategist and endgame expert, in contrast, say, to Tal with his sparkling tactics. But, like any great player, he was able to do everything, and if 'life compelled it' he would boldly launch into a maelstrom of combinations. This is shown by the following examples revealing the great versatility of his amazing talent.

We will begin with a game played for his native 'Burevestnik' in the 1968 USSR Team Cup and later judged the best in the sixth volume of the Yugoslav *Chess Informator.*

Game 115
V.Smyslov-V.Liberzon
USSR Team Cup, Riga 1968
English Opening A25

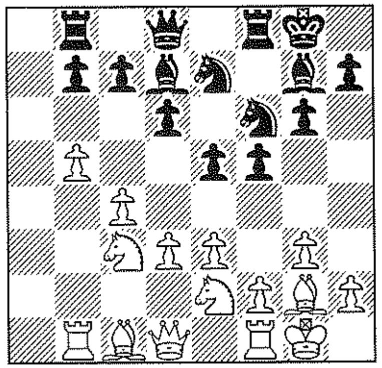
1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 ♖b1!? d6 6 b4



6...a6

6...f5 7 b5 ♘ce7 8 e3 ♘f6 9 d4 with an edge (Smyslov-Ungureanu, Lugano Olympiad 1968).

7 e3 f5 8 ♘ge2 ♘f6 9 d3 0-0 10 0-0 ♗d7 11 a4 ♖b8 12 b5 axb5 13 axb5 ♘e7



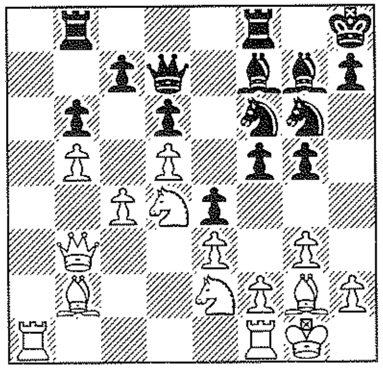
14 ♗a3! ♗e6 15 ♕b3 (intending d3-d4) **15...b6**

'15...c5? is not possible on account of 16 bxc6 bxc6 17 ♕xb8 ♕xb8 18 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 19 ♗xd6.' (Smyslov)

16 d4 (threatening 17 dxe5 dxe5 18 ♖fd1 with strong pressure) **16...e4 17 d5 ♗f7 18 ♘d4 ♕d7?**

This is pseudo-development: the queen takes away a square from its own knight. 'If 18...♘d7 White was intending 19 ♘e6 ♗xe6 20 dxe6 ♘e5 21 ♘d5! with an obvious advantage,' writes Smyslov. However, instead of 20...♘e5?! it is far better to play 20...♘c5! 21 ♗xc5 bxc5 with an unclear game (for example, 22 f3 exf3 23 ♗xf3 ♖f6 24 ♗d5 c6 favours Black).

19 ♗b2 g5 (trying to play the knight to e5 via g6) **20 ♘ce2** (20 ♖a1 with the idea of ♖a6 is also possible, but Smyslov's plan appeals to me more) **20...♔h8 21 ♖a1 ♘g6**



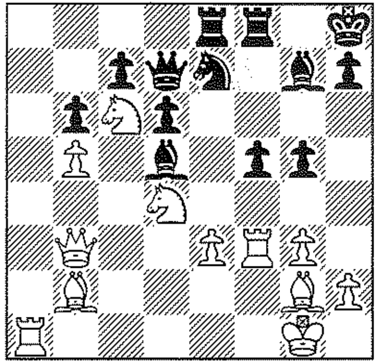
22 f4! (radically eliminating Black's counterplay and exposing the weaknesses in his position) **22...exf3**

'If 22...gxf4, then 23 ♘xf4 ♘xf4 24 ♖xf4 and the f5-pawn is doomed. Also bad is 22...g4 23 ♖a7 followed by ♘c6 or ♘e6.' (Smyslov) Nevertheless, possibly Black should have played 22...g4 and tried to create something resembling a fortress, although here he risks being slowly suffocated.

23 ♖xf3 ♘e7 24 ♘c6 (24 ♖af1!? is also not bad) **24...♖be8 25 ♘ed4 ♘fxd5?!**

In a strategically lost position, Black, as Smyslov expresses it, 'decides on extreme measures'.

26 cxd5? (for some reason none of the commentators showed that the cold 'machine' continuation 26 ♖f2! ♘f6 27 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 28 ♘xf5 would have won at once) **26...♗xd5**



27 ♘xf5!!

'An unexpected queen sacrifice, which precipitates a storm of complications. 'My opponent was hoping to gain sufficient compensation for the piece in the variation 27 ♕c2 ♗xf3 28 ♗xf3 ♘g6.' (Smyslov)

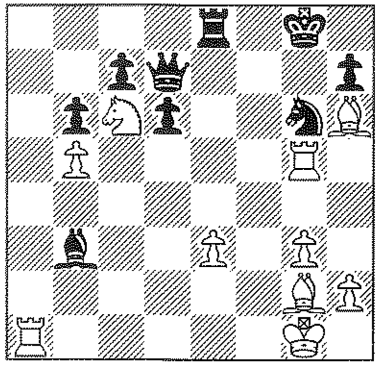
27...♖xf5 (of course, not 27...♗xb3? 28 ♗xg7+ ♔g8 29 ♘cxe7+ ♖xe7 30 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 31 ♖a8+ ♔f7 32 ♘d4+ ♔g7 33 ♘xb3, or 27...♘xf5? 28 ♕xd5 ♗xb2 29 ♖af1 and wins) **28 ♗xg7+ ♔g8!**

'A cool defence. Weaker is 28...♔xg7? 29 ♕c3+ ♔g8 30 ♖xf5 ♕xf5 31 e4 (*or 31 ♖f1 ♕e6 32 ♖f6 – G.K.*) 31...♗xe4 32 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 33 ♖e1.' (Smyslov) Black is also not saved by 29...♔g6 30 ♖xf5 ♕xf5 31 ♖f1 ♕e6 32 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 33 ♗xd5.

29 ♖xf5! (the queen remains en prise!) **29...♗xb3 30 ♖xg5 ♘g6!**

'If 30...h6, then 31 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 (or 31...♖xe7 32 ♖a8+ ♖e8 33 ♗xh6+ ♔h7 34 ♖g7+ ♕xg7 35 ♗xg7 ♖xa8 36 ♗xa8 ♔xg7 37 g4 and the bishop ending is won for White) 32 ♗xh6+ ♔h8 33 ♖h5! ♔g8 34 ♖f1 with a winning attack.' (Smyslov)

31 ♗h6



31...♕e6!

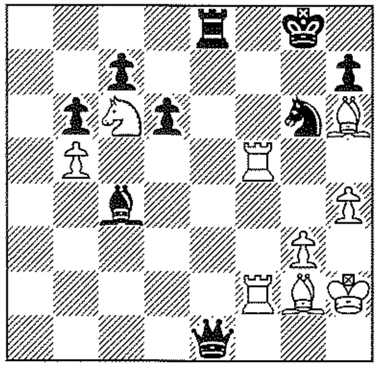
Again Black rises to the occasion. It was far worse to play 31...♔h8 (31...♖xe3? 32 ♖xg6+ hxg6 33 ♗xe3 and wins) 32 ♘d4! ♗c4 (or 32...♕f7 33 ♖f5 ♕c4 34 ♗c6 ♖b8 35 ♗g5 etc.) 33 ♗c6 ♕h3 34 ♘f5 with the double threat of ♗xe8 and ♗g2.

32 h4! (creating the threat of h4-h5) **32...♕xe3+ 33 ♔h2 ♕c3 34 ♖f1 ♗c4 35 ♖f2?!**

Another critical moment in the game that was ignored by the commentators. In my view, 35 ♖f3! was stronger, and after 35...♕b2 36 h5 ♔h8 37 ♔h3 ♖e2 38 hxg6 hxg6 39 ♖xg6 White has a clear advantage (39...♖xg2? is not possible in view of 40 ♗g7+).

35...♕e1 36 ♖gf5

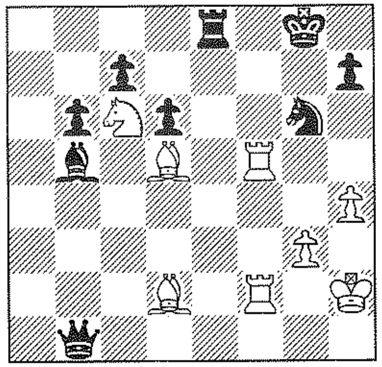
'Now h4-h5 cannot be averted, and Black has no satisfactory reply.' (Smyslov) But the computer shows that he has!



36...♗xb5??

Here it is, the fatal mistake! After 36...♗e6! 37 ♖f6 ♔h8 38 ♖f1 ♕c3 39 h5 ♕c5! the position would have remained completely unclear. White has quite good compensation, but both sides can play for a win.

37 ♗d2! (a regrouping, leading to a pretty mating finish) **37...♕b1** (37...♕a1 38 ♖xb5) **38 ♗d5+**



38...♔h8 (White wins in very fine fashion after 38...♔g7 39 ♖f7+ ♔h8 40 ♗c3+ ♘e5 41 ♘xe5 dxe5 42 ♖xc7 and 43 ♗xe5+) **39 ♗c3+ ♘e5 40 ♘xe5 dxe5 41 ♖xe5 1-0**

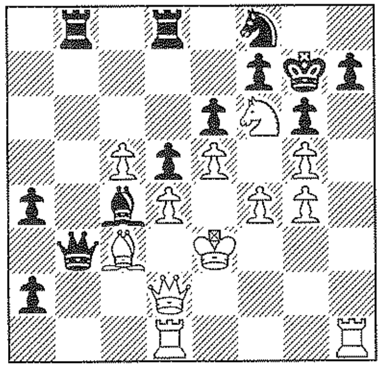
A brilliant win, although it is somewhat surprising that neither the winner himself, nor the jury, who judged this to be the *Chess Informator* prize-winner, noticed the important subtleties that were spotted immediately by the computer (26 ♖f2!, 35 ♖f3! and 36...♗e6!).

In the spring of 1970 Smyslov played on board six for the USSR team in the historic 'match of the century' against the rest of the world (I should mention in brackets that he also played in the 1984 'match of the century', but this time on board four!). At first he was opposed by his old friend and rival Reshevsky (+1 -1 =1), and in the last round by Fridrik Olafsson. This game decided the outcome of the entire match! The ex-champion accurately outplayed his opponent in a Catalan Opening, maintained his advantage in a time scramble and sealed the best move. The adjournment session became a real drama: by that time the overall score had become 19½-19½.

'Psychologically I found myself in an extremely difficult position,' Smyslov recalls. 'All the other games had finished, and we played on for about a further hour. The remaining players (both theirs and ours) crowded around and waited. The final result wholly depended on us. If I won – we would win the match. If not, then I would be the only culprit. Imagine what tension that game cost me! One mistake, and... This win remained one of my most memorable, and for intensity I can compare the game only with those that made me world champion.'

...Fully in the style of Tal – or, if you like, Shirov – was how Vasily Vasilievich conducted the finish to the following game from the 21st round of the Interzonal in Palma de Mallorca 1970. On this occasion he did not play the Catalan Opening altogether successfully, came under positional pressure by Black – and decided that a reckless attack on the king was his only chance.

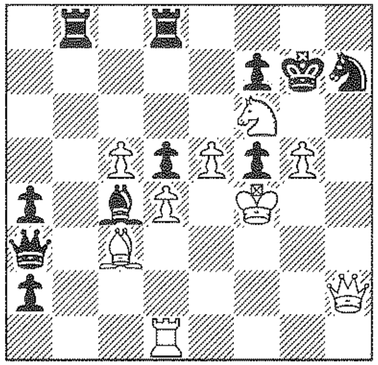
Game 116
V.Smyslov-J.Rubinetti
Interzonal Tournament,
Palma de Mallorca 1970



38 f5! exf5 39 gxf5 ♕a3 40 ♔f4 gxf5 41 ♖xh7+?!

A stunning sealed move! The rook sacrifice appears to promise White a formidable attack: the frisky knight at f6 dominates matters. On the resumption there followed:

41...♘xh7 42 ♕h2!



42...♘xg5

'If 42...♔f8 (*! – G.K.*) there could have followed 43 ♕h6+ ♔e7 44 ♘xh7.' (Smyslov) But what next? A powerful modern computer finds without difficulty... a draw for White: 44...♖b2!? (44...a1♕ 45 ♕f6+ ♔e8 46 ♕c6+ is more simple-minded) 45 ♕f6+ ♔d7 46 ♕xf7+ ♔c6 47 ♕f6+ ♔c7 48 ♗xb2 ♕xb2 49 ♕b6+ ♕xb6 50 cxb6+ ♔xb6 51 ♘f6 ♔c7 52 g6 ♖b8! 53 g7 ♖b1 54 g8♕ ♖xd1 55 ♕f7+ ♔b6 56 ♘xd5+! ♗xd5 57 ♕xd5 a1♕ 58 ♕c5+ with perpetual check.

43 ♕g3 ♔f8 44 ♕xg5 ♕xc3??

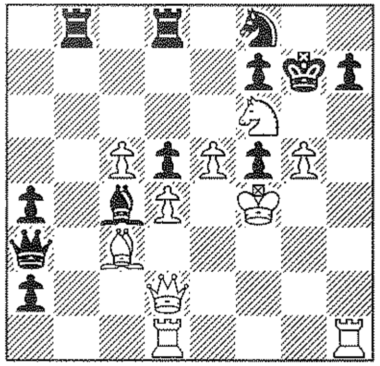
What for?! As it is, Black has an enormous material advantage! It is true that 44...♖b2?! (with the idea of ...♖f2+) would have been refuted by the pretty 45 ♘e4!! (a multipurpose move: defence of f2 and the bishop at c3 plus an attack on the rook at d8) 45...♔e8 (what else?) 46 e6! (another sacrifice, exposing the king; ♕g8+ is threatened) 46...fxe6 47 ♖h1 (as quickly as possible onto the seventh rank!) 47...♔d7 (if 47...♖h2, then simply 48 ♖xh2 ♕c1+ 49 ♗d2) 48 ♖h7+ ♔c8 49 ♕e7 ♖f2+ 50 ♔e5 and White wins. In contrast to its opposite number, White's king feels very comfortable in the middle of the board!

However, 'correct was 44...a1♕! 45 ♖xa1 (*45 ♗xa1? ♕b3 is dangerous for White – G.K.*) 45...♕xc3 46 ♘h7+ ♔e8 47 ♘f6+ ♔f8 (but not 47...♔e7?? 48 ♘e4+) 48 ♘h7+ with a repetition of moves.' (Smyslov)

45 e6! 1-0

A spectacular blow! In view of 45...♔e7 46 ♘xd5+, or 45...fxe6 46 ♕g8+ ♔e7 47 ♕g7 mate, Black resigned.

Can it really be true that against accurate defence by the opponent White had only a draw? Let us return to the adjourned position (before 41 ♖xh7+) and see whether he had anything better:



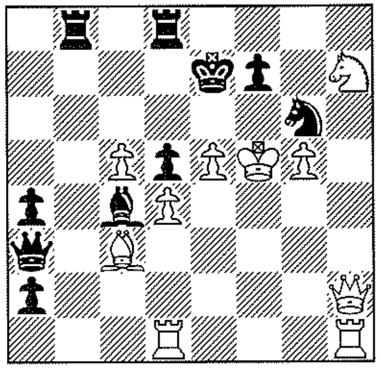
Analysis diagram

41 ♕h2! suggests itself (in his commentary Smyslov attaches an exclamation mark to 41 ♖xh7+, but does not even consider the queen move) with the idea of 41...♕xc3? 42 ♕h6+ ♔h8 43 ♕xh7+! ♘xh7 44 ♖xh7 mate.

Common sense suggests the reply 41...♘e6+, opening a way for the king to e7. After 42 ♔xf5 it appears that the white king is too exposed and that it may come to grief, as soon as the black queen comes into play. But it turns out that this 'bare king' participates in the mating attack itself! After the only move 42...♔f8 there unexpectedly follows 43 ♕xh7!, for example: 43...♕xc3 44 ♕xf7+!! ♔xf7 45 g6+ (an important interposition) 45...♔f8 46 ♖h8+ ♔e7 47 ♖h7+ ♔f8 48 ♖f7 mate, or 43...♘g7+ (apparently disrupting the coordination of the white pieces, but...) 44 ♕xg7+!! ♔xg7 45 ♖h7+ ♔f8 46 e6 ♖b7 (46...fxe6+ 47

♔g6 and mate) 47 e7+! (shutting in the king; Fritz finds this mating move in a couple of seconds) 47...♔xe7 (47...♖xe7? 48 ♖h8+) 48 ♖e1+ ♔f8 49 ♖h8+ ♔g7 50 ♖xd8 ♗d3+ 51 ♔g4 and the black king has nowhere to hide (51...♗h7 52 ♘h5+ ♔g6 53 ♖d6+ f6 54 ♖xf6 mate). A very rare instance, when the king itself leads its army in the concluding assault!

41...♘g6+ is stronger, but this does not save Black either in view of 42 ♔xf5 ♔f8 (42...♘e7+ is bad in view of the familiar 43 ♔g4 h5+ 44 ♘xh5+ ♔f8 45 ♘f6 ♘g8 46 e6 ♕xc3 47 e7+ with mate) 43 ♘xh7+! (after 43 e6 ♕xc3 44 ♘xh7+ ♔e8 45 ♘f6+ ♔f8 46 ♘h7+ White has perpetual check at best) 43...♔e7.



Analysis diagram

44 e6! ♖b7 (44...♖bc8 45 exf7 etc. is unlikely to change anything) 45 exf7! ♔xf7! (45...a1♕ 46 ♔xg6!!; 45...♕xc3 46 ♔xg6 ♗d3+ 47 ♔h6) 46 ♕h5 (46 ♔g4 ♕xc3 47 ♕f2+ ♔e7 48 c6 ♔d6 49 cxb7 ♔c7 50 ♖he1 also retains the advantage) 46...♖g8 47 ♕f3 ♖g7 48 ♖de1 ♖e7 49 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 50 ♕e3+ ♔d7 51 ♔f6 ♖e7 52 ♕h3+ ♔c6 53 ♕c8+ ♖c7 54 ♕a8+ ♔b5 55 ♕b8+ ♔c6 56 ♖e1 and after irrational complications White celebrates victory.

And yet in 1996, when this material was published, the win here seemed a world away! It all became 'obvious' only with the help of 21st century computer technology... Even so it is pretty to the human eye, deprived of computer lenses!

A few months after the Interzonal in Mallorca, Smyslov won the strong Amsterdam 1971 tournament – 10 out of 15, and was then a prize-winner in the 39th USSR Championship (Leningrad 1971): 1. Savon – 15 out of 21; 2-3. Smyslov and Tal – 13½; 4. Karpov – 13; 5-6. Balashov and Stein – 12; 7-8. Bronstein and Polugayevsky – 11½ etc. The enormously strong Alekhine Memorial tournament was held that same autumn in Moscow: 1-2. Karpov and Stein – 11 out of 17; 3. Smyslov – 10½; 4-5. Petrosian and Tukmakov – 10; 6-7. Spassky and Tal – 9½ etc. In these three tournaments – a total of 53 games – the seventh world champion went through undefeated, and in the last of them he finished ahead of the eighth, ninth and the tenth (reigning) champions!

Precisely at that time the young Anatoly Karpov, who already lost very rarely in those days, was beginning his triumphal ascent. But in his first meeting with the 50-year-old chess legend he ran into difficulties in the opening.

Game 117

V.Smyslov-A.Karpov

USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1971, 9th round
Queen's Gambit Declined D42

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e3 e6

Later Karpov several times tried 5...♘xc3 6 bxc3 g6, in the spirit of the Grünfeld Defence.

6 d4 cxd4 7 exd4 ♗e7 8 ♗d3

8 ♗c4 is also possible (*Game No.36*), 'but in my games I have preferred the development of the bishop at d3.' (Smyslov)

8...0-0 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♖e1

This is more useful than 10 a3 (*Game No.119*). 'A classic position from the Tarrasch Defence Deferred has arisen. In my games it has occurred several times. Here extremely accurate play is demanded of Black.' (Smyslov)

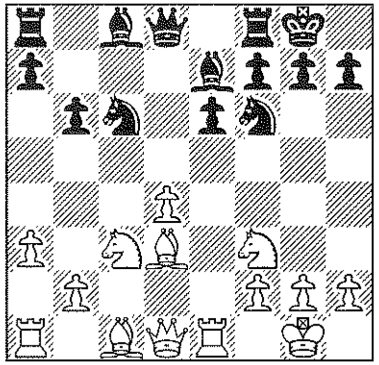
10...♘f6

A perfectly acceptable continuation, although, in my opinion, the most critical is 10...♗f6 11 ♗e4 ♘ce7 (*Game No.120*), to which Karpov also later turned.

11 a3 (11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗e3 ♘b4 13 ♗b1 b6 is unclear, Karpov-Beliavsky, Linares 1995)

11...b6

A *tabiya* of this variation.



12 ♗c2!?

A roughly equal game results from both 12 ♗e3 ♗b7 13 ♖c1 ♖c8 14 ♗b1 ♖c7 (Uhlmann-Karpov, Leningrad Interzonal 1973) or 14...♘a5 (J.Polgar-Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 1998), and 12 ♗f4 ♗b7 13 ♗c2 ♖c8 14 ♕d3 g6 15 ♖ad1 ♘a5 16 ♗h6 ♖e8 17 ♗a4 ♗c6 (Smyslov-Andersson, Reggio Emilia 1986).

Possibly the more accurate move order 12 ♗g5!? ♗b7 13 ♗c2, when a position from the present game is reached after 13...♖c8 14 ♕d3 g6 15 ♖ad1 ♘d5 16 ♗h6 (Beliavsky-Karpov, Moscow 1986). Instead of 13...♖c8, 13...♘d5 14 ♕d3 g6 15 ♗h6 is no better, as are the other replies:

1) 13...♖e8 14 ♕d3 g6 15 h4 ♖c8 16 ♖ad1!? (16 ♖ac1 Reshevsky-Fischer, USA 5th matchgame 1961) 16...a6 (or 16...♘d5 17 ♘xd5 exd5 18 b4 ♗xg5 19 hxg5) 17 ♗b3 ♘a5 18 ♗a2 b5 19 ♘e5 ♘d5 20 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 22 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 23 ♘g4 with advantage to White (Kavalek-Larsen, Solingen 6th matchgame 1970);

2) 13...h6 14 ♗h4 (14 ♗f4 ♗d6!?) 14...♘h5 (if 14...♘d5 15 ♕d3 g6, then 16 ♖e4! ♖c8 17 ♖g4 ♕e8 18 ♘xd5 exd5 19 ♖e1 ♖c7 20 ♖e6!, as played in the game Jenkins-Leong, correspondence 1992) 15 d5! ♗xh4 (or 15...exd5 16 ♕d3 f5 17 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 18 ♘d4) 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘e5! with a dangerous initiative (J.Polgar-Karpov, Budapest rapidplay 8th matchgame 1998).

12...♗b7?!

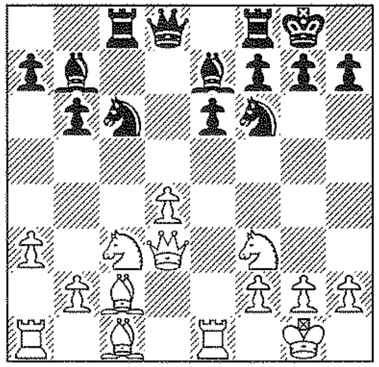
Black can try to exploit White's 12th move with 12...♗a6!, preventing ♕d3. For example: 13 ♗f4 ♖c8 14 ♖c1 ♗c4 etc. (Timman-Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 1998).

13 ♕d3

'White's battery of pieces is directed towards the kingside.' (Smyslov) Now Black has a rather unpleasant position.

13...♖c8?

Making himself vulnerable to d4-d5. The correct move is 13...g6 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 ♖ad1 ♖c8, although after 16 ♗b3 ♘a5 17 ♗a2 ♘d5 18 ♘e4 (Christiansen-Gheorghiu, Torremolinos 1977) or 16 h4!? ♘d5 17 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 18 ♕d2 ♕d6 19 ♗e4 (Ribli-Gheorghiu, Warsaw Zonal 1979) the initiative is with White.



14 ♗g5?!

Returning the compliment! By habit Vasily Vasilievich makes an 'automatic' move: why calculate complicated variations when you can simply complete your development? And yet after 14 d5! Black's position is unenviable:

1) 14...exd5 15 ♗g5 g6 (the queen has to be given up: if 15...♘e4? 16 ♘xe4 dxe4 17 ♕xe4 g6, then not even 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♕xe7 ♘xe7 20 ♖xe7 ♗xf3 21 ♗b3, but 18 ♗h6! ♖e8 19 ♖ad1 ♕c7 20 ♗b3 with a catastrophe on f7) 16 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♗xe7 ♘cxe7, and although Black has saving chances, White should win;

2) 14...♘b8 15 dxe6 ♕xd3 (Franco-Paunovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1983), and here 16 exf7+! ♔xf7 17 ♘e5+ is decisive;

3) 14...♘a5 15 ♗g5 ♖xc3 (15...g6? 16 d6!) 16 bxc3 ♕xd5 'when White has the exchange for a pawn, although a complicated game is still in prospect.' (Smyslov) In my opinion, after 17 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♘d4 Black faces a tedious struggle for a draw.

14...g6 15 ♖ad1 ♘d5 (15...♖e8 16 h4!, as in the aforementioned Kavalek-Larsen game) **16 ♗h6 ♖e8**

Things appear to be not so bad for Black, but here White makes a venomous move: he approaches with his bishop from the other side.

17 ♗a4! (a pawn sacrifice!) **17...a6**

Black is forced to lose time. 17...♘xc3 18 bxc3 ♗xa3 is dangerous in view of 19 c4 with the threat of d4-d5.

18 ♘xd5 ♕xd5

'Of course, 18...exd5 could not have appealed to Black on positional grounds.' (Smyslov)

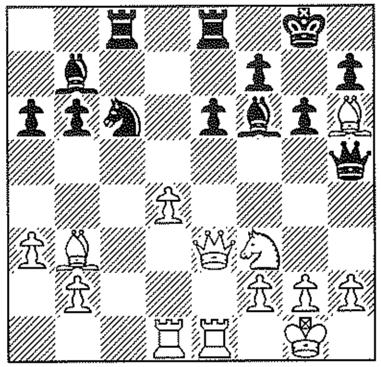
19 ♕e3! (with the threat of ♗b3 and d4-d5)

19...♗f6

'Interesting complications would have arisen after 19...♕h5 20 d5 ♗c5 (20...exd5 21 ♕xb6) 21 ♕f4 exd5 22 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23 g4 ♕h3 (23...g5 24 ♘xg5 ♕g6 25 ♗c2 and wins) 24 ♘g5, and neither 24...♕xh6 25 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 26 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 27 ♘e6+ ♔f6 28 g5+, nor 24...♗xf2+ 25 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 26 ♔f1 are possible.' (Smyslov)

20 ♗b3 ♕h5?

A surprising mistake! Only 15 years later, in the aforementioned game with Beliavsky, did Karpov demonstrate the only reply – 20...♕d7, although after 21 d5! exd5 22 ♕xb6 ♖xe1+ 23 ♖xe1 ♗xb2 24 ♗xd5 White retained some advantage.



21 d5!

An explosion after quiet manoeuvres! In the given case this standard advance has destructive consequences.

21...♘d8 22 d6 ♖c5 (22...♗xf3 23 d7!) **23 d7 ♖e7**

'The only possibility of complicating White's task was 23...♖f8.' (Smyslov) Although, after 24 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 25 ♖d6 he has a technically won position, for example: 25...♗xf3 26 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 27 gxf3 ♖c7 28 ♖ed1 ♔e7 29 ♖xb6 ♖xd7 30 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 31 ♖xa6 ♔c7 32 a4 ♗xb2 33 a5 ♗c3 34 ♖a8 ♘c6 35 ♖f8.

24 ♕f4 ♗g7?!

This loses quickly, as does 24...♖f5? 25 ♕b8. The computer finds the resource 24...♗xf3! 25 ♕xf6 ♕xh6 26 ♕xe7 ♕g5 27 ♕xg5 ♖xg5, but even so this is also insufficient: 28 ♖d3 ♖xg2+ 29 ♔f1 ♗c6 30 ♖c1 ♖xh2 31 ♖xc6! ♘xc6 32 ♖c3 ♘d8 33 ♖c8 ♔f8 34 ♖xd8+ ♔e7 35 ♖f8.

25 ♕b8 ♕xh6 26 ♕xd8+ ♗f8 27 ♖e3!

'All the same Black cannot stop the passed d-pawn, and so it is useful for White not to allow the doubling of his pawns by the exchange on f3.' (Smyslov)

27...♗c6 28 ♕xf8+ ♕xf8 29 d8♕ 1-0

Perhaps not the most striking win, but one gained in the typically Smyslov manner.

When on the eve of the world championship match in Reykjavik (1972) Smyslov was asked who, in his opinion, would win, he gave a distinctive reply: 'Who will now win, Fischer or Spassky, is their affair. I have already played three matches for the world championship, and that's enough for me.'

Vasily Vasilievich did indeed reduce speed and use his reserves of energy very economically. Whereas in his years at the top he was one of the creators of modern theory, developing new schemes and setting his opponents difficult problems, in later years he simply played his favourite variations on the whole, not bothering about chess fashion.

This makes his successful play for many years against young grandmasters, who have assimilated the achievements of modern theory, even more admirable. On encountering a surprise in the opening, he would take those decisions that were suggested to him by his colossal natural intuition. Decisions that sometimes staggered his opponents.

Game 118

J.Timman-V.Smyslov

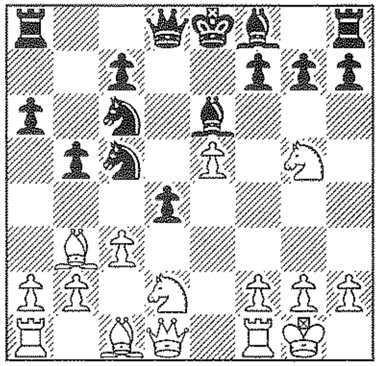
Bad Lauterberg 1979
Ruy Lopez C80

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5

In the 45th USSR Championship (Leningrad 1977) Smyslov surprised Tal with 7...♗e7 – after 8 ♘xe5 (8 ♖e1; 8 ♗d5!?) 8...♘xe5 9 dxe5 ♗b7 10 ♕g4 0-0 11 f3?! (11 ♖e1!) 11...♘g5 12 f4 ♘e4 Black achieved excellent play and gained a confident win.

8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 ♘bd2 ♘c5 10 c3 d4 11 ♘g5!?

The latest word in fashion at that time: this was played in the Karpov-Korchnoi match (Baguio 10th matchgame 1978), and after 11...dxc3 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 bxc3 ♕d3 14 ♘f3 ♕xd1 (it is better to play 14...0-0-0! with equality, Kasparov-Anand, New York 6th matchgame 1995) 15 ♗xd1 Black held out in an inferior endgame. I don't know whether Smyslov was afraid of some surprises (such as 14 ♗c2! ♕xc3 15 ♘b3!! Kasparov-Anand, New York 10th matchgame 1995), but he is the first to deviate.



11...♕xg5!?

A fearless reply. Black has also tried 11...♗d5?! 12 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 13 ♕f3+ ♔e6 14 ♕g4+! ♔e7 15 e6! ♗xe6 16 ♖e1 with an attack (Svidler-Anand, Dos Hermanas 1999).

12 ♕f3! 0-0-0!?

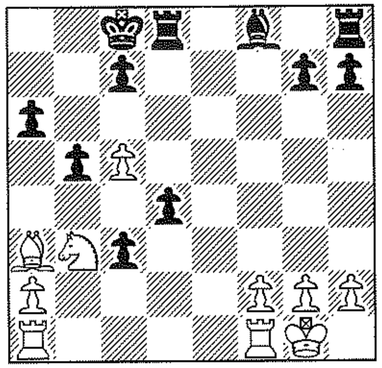
A novelty and, strangely enough, a recommendation by Timman himself. Both 12...♔d7?! 13 ♗d5! ♗xd5 14 ♕xd5+ ♗d6 15 cxd4 and 12...♗d7 13 ♗xf7+ ♔e7 14 ♗d5!? ♘xe5 15 ♕e2 d3 16 ♕e1 and 17 f4 are unsatisfactory for Black.

13 ♗xe6+ (13 ♕xc6 ♕xe5 14 ♘f3 ♕d5! 15 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♘xd4 ♗xc6 17 ♘xc6 ♖e8 with equality – Stean) **13...fxe6 14 ♕xc6 ♕xe5! 15 b4!**

I think it is unlikely that Smyslov knew the particular subtleties of this variation, so from now on he was improvising at the board. White has also made other tries for an advantage: 15 a4 bxa4 16 ♘f3 ♕d5 17 ♘xd4 ♖d6 18 ♕xd5 exd5 or 15 ♘f3 ♕d5 16 ♘xd4 e5 17 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 18 ♘b3 with approximate equality.

15...♕d5! 16 ♕xd5 exd5 17 bxc5 dxc3 18 ♘b3 d4 19 ♗a3!

A sharp endgame has arisen, where Black's pair of connected passed pawns looks sufficient compensation for the piece. But is this in fact so?



19...♗e7

Many years later, in a game with Shirov (Wijk aan Zee 1996), Timman tried to improve on Black's play with 19...g6?! There followed 20 ♗b4 ♗g7 21 a4 ♔d7 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♖ad1 (but not 23 ♖a6?! ♖a8! 24 ♖fa1 ♖xa6 25 ♖xa6 d3) 23...♔e6! 24 ♖fe1+ ♔d5! 25 ♗xc3 ♔c4 26 ♗a5! ♔xb3 27 ♖b1+ ♔c4 28 ♖ec1+ ♔d5 with a fragile equilibrium.

It is amusing that up to the 23rd move all this was repeated in the game Kasparov-Shirov (Linares 2001), but here I played 23 ♖fd1! ♔e6 24 ♖ac1!, clamping down on the black king. After 24...♖he8 25 ♔f1 (with the threat of ♔e2-d3) 25...♔f5 26 c6 g5 (26...♖e6? 27 ♗xc3) 27 ♗a5 ♖d6 28 ♗b4 ♖dd8 29 ♖d3! g4 30 ♗c5 ♔e4 (or 30...♖e4 31 Rcxc3 dxc3 32 ♖xd8 and wins) 31 ♖cd1 h5 (31...c2 32 ♖1d2) 32 ♘xd4 Black soon resigned.

20 ♗b4 ♗f6 21 a4! ♔d7

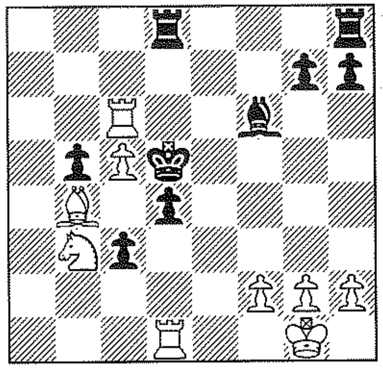
Later Black tried 21...bxa4!? 22 c6! d3! 23 ♖xa4 d2 24 ♖xa6 ♔b8 25 ♘xd2 cxd2 26 ♖d1 ♖he8 27 ♔f1 ♖e1+! 28 ♖xe1 dxe1♕+ 29 ♔xe1 ♖e8+ 30 ♔f1 ♗d4 with sufficient counterplay.

22 axb5 axb5 23 ♖a6

According to an old analysis by Lilienthal, it is stronger to play 23 ♖fd1! ♔e6 24 ♖ac1, as was played with the bishop at g7 in my aforementioned game with Shirov.

23...c6 (of course, not 23...♖a8? because of 24 ♖xf6! gxf6 25 ♘xd4) **24 ♖d1 ♔e6!** (the king joins the battle!) **25 ♖xc6+ ♔d5**

The culminating point of the game.



26 ♖xf6!

It is probable that, when he made this move, Timman had already mentally buried his opponent, and that Black's reply did not even occur to him.

26...♔c4!!

A grandiose resource, and moreover it was found at the board! Of course, 26...gxf6? was bad due to 27 ♖xd4+ ♔c6 28 ♗xc3 etc.

27 ♖f4

An interesting moment. In an attempt to improve White's play, I concentrated on 27 ♖d6!? The commentators gave 27...♖xd6 28 cxd6 ♔xb3 (28...♔xb4? 29 ♘xd4) 29 ♖xd4 c2 30 ♗d2 ♖c8! 'with an unclear game', although after 31 ♖b4+! ♔a3 32 ♔f1 c1♕+ 33 ♗xc1+ ♖xc1+ 34 ♔e2 it is all crystal-clear: things are hopeless for Black. As is also the case after 29...♖d8 30 ♔f1 ♔b2 31 d7 c2 32 ♗d2 c1♕+ 33 ♗xc1+ ♔xc1 34 ♔e2 ♔c2 35 ♔e3 ♔c3 36 ♖d1 b4 37 ♖c1+ ♔b2 38 ♖c7 b3 39 ♔e4 and wins.

Therefore after 27 ♖d6!? the correct defence is 27...♔xb3 28 ♖1xd4 ♖a8 29 g3 ♖a4! (but not 29...♖hc8? 30 ♖b6 ♖xc5 31 ♗xc5 c2 32 ♖xb5+ ♔c3 33 ♖d3+ ♔xd3 34 ♗e3 and wins) 30 ♗xc3 ♔xc3 31 ♖d3+ ♔c2 with a position similar to that which occurred in the game: White stands better, but whether it is a draw or a win is not clear.

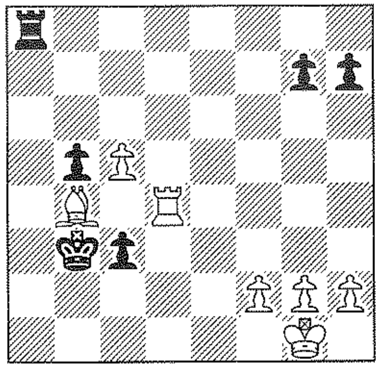
27...♔xb3 28 ♖dxd4

After 28 ♖fxd4?! c2! White is obliged to seek a draw: 29 ♖1d3+! ♔a2 30 ♗d2 ♖xd4 31 ♖xd4 ♖c8 32 ♔f1 ♖xc5 33 ♔e2 c1♕ 34 ♗xc1 ♖xc1 35 ♖d7.

28...♖xd4

But not 28...c2? 29 ♗d2! The finish of the game is also rather instructive: Black conducts this difficult endgame very subtly, not for an instant losing his presence of mind.

29 ♖xd4 ♖a8



30 f4 (or 30 ♔f1 ♖a1+ 31 ♔e2 c2 with a draw) **30...♖a1+ 31 ♔f2 c2 32 ♗d2 c1♕** (of course, not 32...♖d1? 33 ♔e2 c1♕ 34 ♖b4+!) **33 ♗xc1 ♖xc1 34 ♖d7 ♖xc5 35 ♖xg7 h6!**

Again an accurate defence. 35...b4? 36 ♖xh7 ♖b5 37 g4 favours White.

36 g4 b4 (with the idea of ...♖b5) **37 ♖b7** (37 f5 ♖c8) **37...♔c3 38 h4 b3 39 g5 ♖c4 40 ♔f3** (or 40 ♔e3 ♖b4 with a draw) **40...♖b4 41 ♖xb4 ♔xb4 42 g6**

Peace has descended on the board: if 42 gxh6, then 42...b2 43 h7 b1♕ 44 h8♕ ♕d3+ 45 ♔g4 ♕g6+.

42...b2 43 g7 b1♕ 44 g8♕ ♕h1+ 45 ♔e3 ♕xh4 46 ♕d5 h5 47 f5 ♕g5+ 48 ♔e4 h4 49 ♕d6+ ♔b5 50 f6 ♕g6+ 51 ♔f3 h3 52 ♕d7+ ♔b6 53 ♕e6+ ♔c7 54 ♕e7+ ♔c6 55 ♕e6+ ½-½

In total, despite the 30-year age difference, Smyslov had a positive score against Timman – one of the strongest players in the world from the mid-seventies to the early nineties. One only has to think of the crushing defeat that Vasily Vasilievich inflicted on the Dutch grandmaster in the 1981 Moscow international tournament...

Evergreen Master

Unique natural intuition, the ability to take optimal decisions without particular expenditure of energy, and, of course, excellent health – the sum of all these factors fantastically extended Smyslov's chess career. In the late 1970s he seemed to us, to the young, to be a kind of chess mammal, living history, and certainly not a real contender for the world championship. However, his wonderful results in the 1982-1984 cycle overturned all forecasts.

After again being included in the Interzonal without having to qualify, as one of the places from the USSR zone, he unexpectedly went forward to the Candidates (Las Palmas 1982: 1. Ribli, 2. Smyslov), and then drew a very tense quarter-final match with Robert Hübner (6-6 in the main games, 1-1 in additional games) and... chose the right colour in a drawing of lots in a casino. Many judged this to be the reward of fate to a great master, who had conquered time.

Awaiting Vasily Vasilievich in the semi-final was the 32-year-old Zoltan Ribli, who undoubtedly considered himself the favourite. The main strength of the Hungarian grandmaster – deep positional understanding – displayed itself best in quiet, roughly equal positions, but against the 'granddad' Ribli decided to play more sharply, regularly creating complications and provoking Smyslov into active measures. Surely the 62-year-old veteran wouldn't be able to withstand such a strain?

But nothing came of this plan. In the first four games the two players scored one win each with two draws, and then the following fine game proved the turning point of the match.

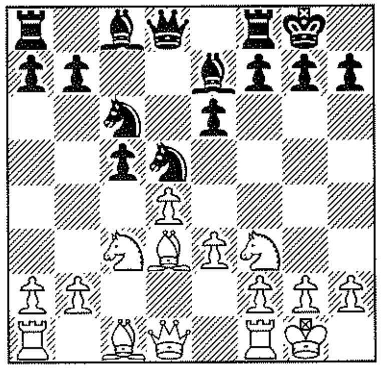
Game 119
V.Smyslov-Z.Ribli
Candidates Match,
London 1983, 5th game
Queen's Gambit Declined D42

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 d5 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5

'During my preparations for the match with Ribli a great deal of attention was devoted to this continuation. And this was not in vain...' (Smyslov)

6 e3 ♘c6 7 ♗d3 (7 ♗c4 – *Games Nos.36 and 46*) **7...♗e7 8 0-0 0-0**

In the event of 8...cxd4 9 exd4 0-0 White acquires the additional resource 10 ♖e1! (*Games Nos.117 and 120*).



9 a3 cxd4 10 exd4 ♗f6 11 ♕c2

In the seventh game Smyslov caused a surprise with a novelty in an 'adjacent' variation: 11 ♗c4 ♘ce7 12 ♘e5 g6 13 ♗h6 ♗g7 14 ♗xg7!? (instead of 14 ♕d2) 14...♔xg7 15 ♖c1! b6 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♕xd5?! (the passive 17...exd5 is more solid) 18 ♖c7 ♗b7 (18...♕d6? 19 ♖xf7+) 19 ♕g4 ♖ad8 (19...♖ac8?! 20 ♖d7 ♕e4 21 ♕xe4 ♗xe4 22 f3 ♗d5 23 ♖xa7 etc.) 20 ♖d1 a5 21 h4! ♖c8 22 ♖d7 ♕e4 23 ♕g5 ♗c6 24 f3 ♕f5 (24...♕e2 25 ♘g4!) 25 ♖a7 ♗a4 26 ♖e1 ♖c2 27 b4 ♗b3 28 bxa5 bxa5 29 ♖e4! h6 30 ♕e3 ♖b2 31 ♖g4! g5 32 hxg5 h5 33 ♖g3 h4 34 ♖g4 h3 35 g6 and White won in attractive style.

11...h6

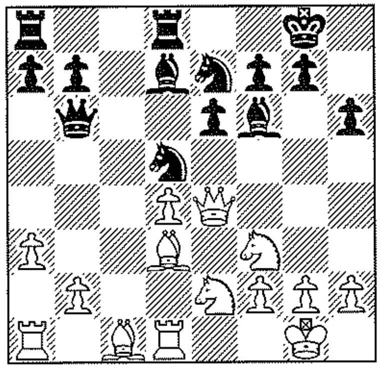
'If 11...g6, then 12 ♗h6 ♖e8 13 ♖ad1, while after 11...♘xd4 there can follow 12 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 13 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 14 ♗e4 and the black king's pawn screen is weakened.' (Smyslov)

12 ♖d1 ♕b6 13 ♗c4 ♖d8

13...♘xd4?! 14 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♘a4 ♕c7 16 ♖xd4 b5 is dangerous in view of 17 ♗xh6! gxh6? 18 ♖g4+ ♔h8 19 ♕d2 and wins.

14 ♘e2 (14 ♗e3!?) **14...♗d7 15 ♕e4 ♘ce7 16 ♗d3**

'An attacking battery has been trained on the shelter of Black's king, and now he has to take great care over his choice of reply.' (Smyslov)

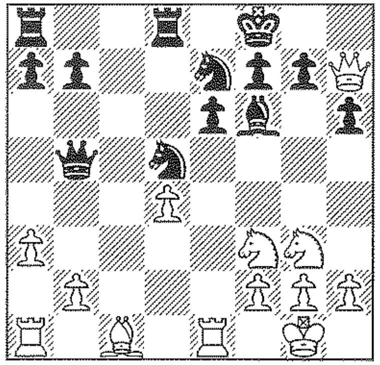


16...♗a4?

A blunder. And yet Black's position is very good! I think that Ribli was happy with his play in the opening and he simply did not believe that ♕h7 was a serious threat, since the queen moves away from the main theatre of war in the centre. Smyslov thought that it was essential to play 16...♗b5 immediately, aiming for the exchange of the light-squared bishops. In my view, all White's threats can be parried by the simple 16...♘g6! – after 17 ♘e5 there is 17...♗xe5 18 dxe5 ♗b5, exchanging bishops and achieving some advantage.

17 ♕h7+ ♔f8 18 ♖e1 (here the rook will play an important role) **18...♗b5 19 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 20 ♘g3!**

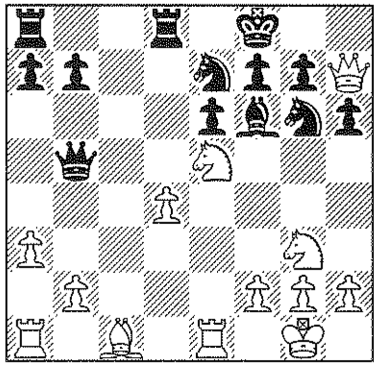
'Leaving his queen at h7, White believes in the strength of his attack.' (Smyslov)



20...♘g6

Hoping to slip away with the king to e7, but now the X-ray effect of the rook at e1 goes into operation. Ribli must certainly have reached this position in his calculations and was hoping for ...♖ac8 with domination in the centre and the exchange of queens (at a convenient moment). However, he underestimated the danger, since he did not even imagine that his opponent would be able to conduct an attack in the style of Tal! More concretely, Ribli underestimated two factors: the strength of White's position, and the Smyslov's ability to play strictly in accordance with the demands of the position.

21 ♘e5! ♘de7



Forced, since both 21...♗xe5? 22 dxe5 ♔e7 23 ♕xg7 ♖h8 24 ♘f5+! exf5 25 e6 and 21...♘df4? 22 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 23 ♘f5! ♘g6 24 ♘xh6! are unsatisfactory. But now Black has defended everything and is attacking the d4-pawn. Without sacrifices White is unable to get at the enemy king...

22 ♗xh6! (22 ♘h5 ♘xe5 23 ♗xh6! would have transposed) **22...♘xe5** (if 22...♗xe5 then 23 ♖xe5! ♘xe5 24 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 25 dxe5 is decisive, for example: 25...♕xb2 26 ♕f8+ ♔d7 27 ♖d1+) **23 ♘h5!**

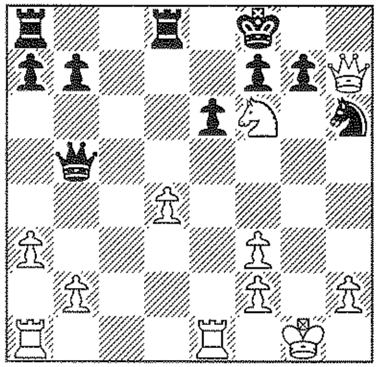
The crux of White's combination. 24 ♗xg7 is threatened.

23...♘f3+

The only sensible reply. 'If 23...gxh6, then 24 ♕xh6+ ♔e8 25 ♘xf6 mate. Or 23...♘f5 24 ♘xf6 ♘xh6 25 dxe5 ♘f5 26 ♖ac1 and 26...gxf6? is not possible due to 27 ♕h8+ ♔e7 28 ♖c7+ ♖d7 29 exf6+ with a material advantage.' (Smyslov)

24 gxf3 ♘f5 (not 24...♕xh5? 25 ♗xg7+ winning the queen, nor 24...gxh6? 25 ♕xh6+ and 26 ♘xf6 mate) **25 ♘xf6 ♘xh6**

The critical moment of the entire game. It appears that Ribli has defended his king and that, thanks to the numerous pawn weaknesses in the opponent's position, he has good prospects. But here a cold shower awaits him:

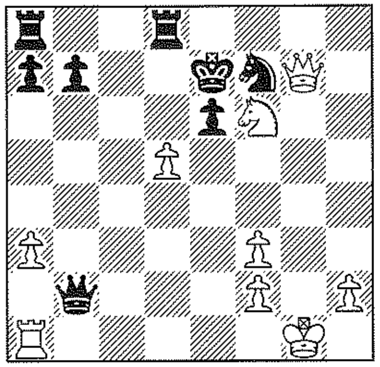


26 d5! (a decisive opening of the position) **26...♕xb2**

If 26...♘f5 there follows a very pretty finish: 27 ♕g8+ ♔e7 28 ♖xe6+ fxe6 29 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 30 ♘h7 mate. 26...gxf6 looks better, but this also loses by force: 27 dxe6 ♕g5+ 28 ♔h1 fxe6 29 ♖g1 ♕f4 30 ♖g7!! ♕xf3+ 31 ♔g1

♖d1+ 32 ♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 33 ♔g2 ♕d5+ 34 f3 ♕d2+ 35 ♔h3 and White gives mate.

27 ♕h8+ ♔e7 28 ♖xe6+!! (a fine finale) **28...fxe6 29 ♕xg7+ ♘f7**



30 d6+!

An elegant 'zwischenzug'! Not 30 ♘g8+? ♖xg8 when the queen is trapped. But now it is Black who loses his queen.

30...♖xd6 (or 30...♔xd6 31 ♘e4+) **31 ♘d5+ ♖xd5 32 ♕xb2**

Black has some compensation for the queen, but the open position of his king causes his downfall. Vasily Vasilievich accurately converts his advantage.

32...b6 33 ♕b4+ ♔f6 34 ♖e1 ♖h8 35 h4 ♖hd8 36 ♖e4 ♘d6 37 ♕c3+ e5 38 ♖xe5! ♖xe5 39 f4 ♘f7 40 fxe5+ ♔e6 41 ♕c4+ 1-0

A bold attack on a grand scale!

Thus, a quarter of a century after his battles for the crown with Botvinnik, Smyslov staggered everyone by defeating Ribli, a player of half his age (6½-4½), and qualifying for the final Candidates match. Here he met the progressing author of these lines, who had defeated the formidable Korchnoi in the other semi-final. This is what I wrote about the match with Smyslov in the late 1980s:

'A piquancy was imparted to the match by the players themselves, who bore absolutely no resemblance to each other. During the match one of them celebrated his 63rd birthday, the other his 21st. Before the Candidates matches one often heard: "What chance has he got at his age?!" Naturally, to this question each of us attached his own meaning... The Interzonal, the quarter-final and the semi-final were for each of us a victory over time. The age limits were extended simultaneously in both directions!

'Smyslov's strength always consisted in his ability to accumulate microscopic advantages by seemingly unpretentious manoeuvres, and in the endgame he was regarded as an unsurpassed virtuoso. The British press called Smyslov the "evergreen master". By that point his chess longevity had begun to approach the record of Lasker... The match was played in Vilnius in March-April 1984 and ended in a win for me (8½-4½). On the whole I coped better in complicated situations, but I gained the most satisfaction from two endgames, where I was able to convert a slight positional advantage.'

Then, to the delight of the chess world, Vasily Vasilievich surpassed Lasker's record, by taking part in another Candidates tournament (Montpellier 1985) in three Interzonals (1987, 1990 and 1993) and in many other events.

In the summer of 1988, almost half a century after his debut in the all-union arena, he played in his last USSR Championship, the 55th, which was a jubilee event and therefore unusually strong. The strain for a 67-year-old was enormous – 17 rounds! But Smyslov battled confidently with the young, drew with Karpov and me, and gained several wins. I especially remember his game with the youngest participant, the 19-year-old talent Vasily Ivanchuk.

Game 120
V.Smyslov-V.Ivanchuk
55th USSR Championship, Moscow 1988
Queen's Gambit Declined D42

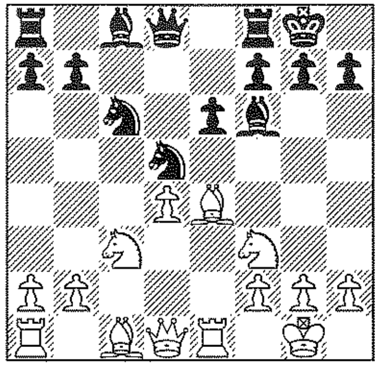
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 (an attempt to provoke 4 d5 and transpose into the Modern Benoni) **4 e3**

Of course! 'This continuation promises White a solid game in the spirit of Queen's Gambit set-ups.' (Smyslov)

4...cxd4 5 exd4 d5 6 ♘c3 ♗e7 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♗d3 (8 ♗c4 – *Game No.36*) **8...♘c6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1**

In this move order it is not worth hurrying with 10 a3 (*Game No.119*).

10...♗f6 (10...♘f6 – *Game No.117*) **11 ♗e4**



11...♘ce7

11...♘de7?! is inferior due to 12 ♗e3 ♕a5 13 ♘d2! ♖d8 14 ♘b3 ♕c7 15 ♕h5 g6 16 ♕f3 ♗g7 17 ♖ad1 ♘b4 18 ♗g5! ♖f8 19 ♗f4 ♕b6 20 ♕g3! (Smyslov-Bisguier, Leipzig Olympiad 1960).

12 ♘e5 ♘c6!?

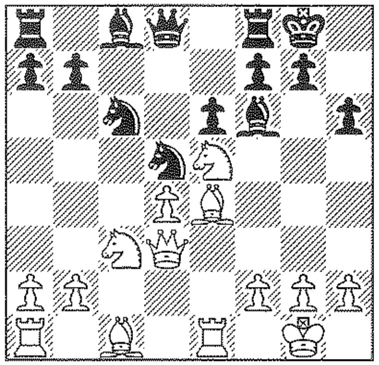
A novelty! Previously Black had played 12...♗d7 13 ♕d3 g6 14 ♗h6 ♗g7 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♘xd5 with some advantage, or 12...g6 13 ♗h6 ♗g7 14 ♕d2 ♘f6 15 ♖ad1 ♘xe4 16 ♖xe4 ♘f5?! (16...b6 17 ♘g4!? is better) 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 d5! with an attack (Smyslov-Padevsky, Moscow 1963).

13 ♕d3!

Possibly Ivanchuk was hoping for a draw by repetition after 13 ♘f3 ♘ce7 (that was how the game Ivanchuk-Karpov, played a few rounds later, concluded), but Vasily Vasilievich decided to fight on!

13...h6

If 13...♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♘xe5 White can interpose 15 ♗xh7+.



14 ♗xd5! (a subtle positional procedure) **14...♘b4**

'In the event of 14...exd5 15 ♗f4 White's position is preferable.' (Smyslov)

15 ♕g3! ♗h4

Black loses material after 15...♘c2? 16 ♗e4 ♘xe1 17 ♗xh6 ♕xd4 18 ♘g4 or 16...♗h4 17 ♕d3 ♘xe1 18 ♕e3 etc., while after 15...exd5 16 ♖e2! White has a slight but persistent pressure.

16 ♕f3 exd5?!

According to Smyslov, '16...♘xd5 is more cautious,' although in my opinion, here too White can launch an attack: 17 ♕g4 ♔h7 18 ♕h5 ♔g8 19 ♘g4! (but not 19 ♘xd5 exd5 20 ♗f4 ♗f6) with the initiative.

Ivanchuk probably thought that with opposite-coloured bishops he would always be able to draw without any problems. This makes it all the more interesting to observe how, move-by-move, Black's position deteriorates and Smyslov methodically, with very fine and accurate play, develops a very strong attack.

17 ♖e2 ♗e6 18 a3 ♘c6 19 ♘xc6 bxc6 20 ♘a4!

White has a positional advantage, since his knight is threatening to occupy a strong post at c5.' (Smyslov)

20...♕c8 21 h3 ♗e7 22 ♗f4 ♕a6 23 ♘c5 ♗xc5 24 dxc5 ♕b5 25 ♖ae1! (increasing his initiative) **25...♔h7**

According to Smyslov, 25...♕xc5 26 ♕g3 with the threats of ♗xh6 and ♗d6 was unfavourable for Black. Yes, after 26...♖fe8 27 ♗xh6 ♕f8 28 ♗f4 ♖ad8 his position is somewhat worse – but perhaps that would have been the lesser evil?

26 ♕g3 ♗f5 27 ♗d6 ♖g8 28 ♖e7 ♗g6

After a series of accurate manoeuvres White's pressure has become rather unpleasant, and it is now not easy for Black to defend. For example, dangerous is 28...♕xb2?! 29 ♖xf7 ♕d2 30 ♖ee7 ♗g6 31 ♖f6 ♕g5 32 ♕xg5 hxg5 33 ♗g3! (but not 33 ♗e5?! ♖ae8 34 ♖fe6 ♗f7! with equality).

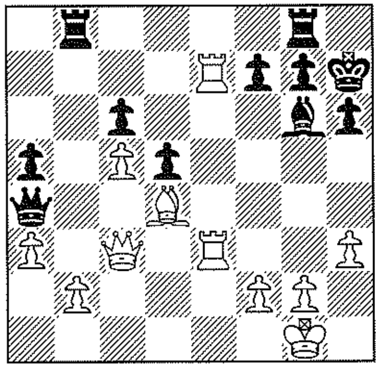
29 ♕c3! (preventing ...d5-d4) **29...♕a4 30 ♗e5**

A successful regrouping (30 b4?! a5!). 'The bishop switches to the long diagonal, at the same time parrying the attempt ...d5-d4.' (Smyslov)

30...♖ae8 31 ♗d4 ♖b8?!

Of course, White also has the initiative after 31...♖xe7 32 ♖xe7, but even so the exchange of rooks would have made Black's defence a little easier: 32...a5 33 ♖c7 (33 ♔h2 ♕b5) 33...♕b5 (33...♖d8 34 b3 ♕xa3 35 ♖xc6 a4 36 ♖b6) 34 b3 a4 35 b4 etc. But apparently Ivanchuk thought that his position was sufficiently solid.

32 ♖1e3! (guarding the b3-square) **32...a5**



33 f4!

Unexpectedly Black finds himself in serious difficulties: White is threatening after 34 f5 ♗xf5 35 ♖xf7 to reach the cherished g7-square.

33...♕d1+ 34 ♖e1!

'The most sensible solution of the problem. After 34 ♔h2?! a4 complications would have arisen.' (Smyslov)

34...♕a4

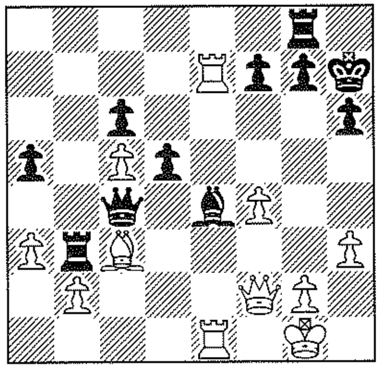
Or 34...♕b3 35 ♕xa5 ♕d3 36 ♕c3 ♖b3 37 ♕xd3 ♖xd3 38 ♗e5 with an obvious advantage in the ending.

35 ♕d2

'The queen is aiming for f2, in order to strengthen the threat of f4-f5.' (Smyslov) It is very instructive that White's manoeuvres are made exclusively on the dark squares!

35...♖b3 36 ♗c3! ♕c4 37 ♕f2 (with the intention of 38 f5) **37...♗e4!?**

A desperate chance, but according to Smyslov – 'a resourceful defence'.



38 ♖xf7! (a decisive exchange sacrifice) **38...d4 39 ♕xd4 ♕xf7 40 ♕xe4+ ♔h8** (40...♕g6? 41 f5) **41 f5**

Smyslov considered this to be the strongest continuation (after 41 ♕xc6? ♕xf4 the h6-pawn is defended), but the computer points out the more radical 41 ♕e6!

41...♕d5 42 ♕xd5 cxd5 43 ♖e6!

In the event of the careless 43 ♖e7? Black could have gained good saving chances by 43...♖xc3! 44 bxc3 ♖c8.

43...♖d8 (43...♖xc3?! 44 bxc3 ♖c8 does not work on account of 45 c6!, while if 43...♔h7, then 44 ♖d6!) **44 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 45 ♖h4!**

'White again takes control of the d4-square.' (Smyslov)

45...♖c8 46 ♖g4 ♖xc5 (46...♖c7 47 f6) **47 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 48 f6 ♖cxc3**

A forced counter-sacrifice, but even this does not help: Black remains material down.

49 bxc3 ♖xc3 50 ♖d7 ♖xa3 51 ♖xd5 ♔f7 52 ♖d6 1-0

A kind of swansong by Smyslov in the national championship, a classic example of his later play. He again demonstrated very fine technique! I think that the veteran's play created an indelible impression on Ivanchuk.

Vasily Vasilievich marked his 70th birthday by victory in the world senior championship (Bad Wörishofen 1991). And, despite serious problems with his eyesight, he carried on playing for a good ten years, with particular pleasure in the traditional 'ladies against seniors' match-tournaments.

In so doing he broke all conceivable age records in the history of chess. In our match he had been 42 years older than me (three times my age!), and it appeared that there was nowhere further to go. But he battled with Ivanchuk when there was an age difference of 48, with Kamsky – 53, with Judit Polgar – 55, and with Bacrot – 62!

The unprecedented chess career of this great master, like a magic crystal, absorbed an entire century: from meetings with the elderly Fedor Duz-Khotimirsky (born 1881), a contemporary of Chigorin and the author of sensational wins over Lasker and Rubinstein in St Petersburg 1909 – to his unique match with the 13-year-old French boy Etienne Bacrot (born 1983), who was already on the verge of becoming a grandmaster. From the stagecoach era to the computer age...

In conclusion, here are some interesting opinions about the seventh world champion from his colleagues:

Euwe: 'Smyslov's manner of play is somehow sneaky: he does not attack you directly, he does not mount a straightforward offensive, he does not threaten to give an immediate mate, but he steals up by other secret means, known only to himself. His unsuspecting opponents do not see through his secret plans, it appears to them that everything is alright... Then they come to their senses, suspect something bad, but it is already too late!'

Botvinnik: 'In the period 1953-58 Smyslov was undoubtedly the strongest tournament fighter. His talent was universal – he could play subtly in the opening, go totally onto the defensive, attack vigorously or manoeuvre coolly. And this is to say nothing about the endgame – here he was in his element. Sometimes he took decisions that were staggering in their depth... The combination of good calculation of variations, boldness, independence and natural health made Smyslov invulnerable at that time.'

Tal: 'Smyslov is known as a player of very distinctive and interesting style, as a virtuoso of the endgame. Smyslov is a modern Capablanca. We have all learned from his brilliant technique of playing endings.'

Petrosian: 'I know the secret of Smyslov's staggering successes. He was able to transform himself in good time, finding a harmonious balance between play "on general grounds" and concrete calculation. Without necessity he does not "drive himself" into a maze of tiring calculations, but when the situation demands it he deeply and accurately calculates variations. Smyslov and I have much in common...'

Fischer: 'Smyslov never plays flippantly. He possesses a subtle positional feeling. He fights desperately in an inferior position.'

Karpov: 'Youthful passion and wisdom, experience and recklessness are harmoniously combined in his play.'

CHAPTER FOUR

Mikhail Nekhemevich the Eighth

Mikhail Nekhemevich Tal (9 November 1936 – 28 June 1992) occupied the chess throne for a shorter time than any of the other world champions, only a year and five days (Smyslov reigned for six days longer), but his star shone as brightly as anyone in the entire history of chess. Perhaps only the exploits of Morphy can be compared with his improbably rapid ascent. His constant readiness to take risks, and his sparkling, swift attacks with unpredictable cascades of sacrifices and wild complications, had an enormous influence on the development of chess thinking in the second half of the 20th century.

His lifestyle was far from ideal and was hardly an example to be imitated, but his style of play was altogether inimitable, since it is impossible to copy the play of a genius. Tal is the only player I can remember who did not calculate lengthy variations: he simply saw through them! Hundreds of fantastic combinations were constantly whirling around in his brain, and his imagination knew no bounds. There was something Mephistophelian in his penetrative stare at the board, although he was a gentle and very tactful person.

Tal himself expressed his creative credo as follows: 'What do you do, when you need to win? Try to give mate? But your opponent will anticipate the attack already at birth and will take all necessary measures. Exploit positional weaknesses? Your opponent will not even think of creating them! Therefore nowadays the two players often deliberately deviate from the generally recognised laws, turning into a "dense forest" of unexplored variations, onto a narrow mountain path, where there is room for only one. Too many players now know very well not only the chess multiplication tables, but also chess logarithms, and therefore *in order to achieve success, you sometimes have to try and demonstrate that two times two is five*... It stands to reason that, with such play, which demands great physical and emotional intensity and enormous nervous output, the percentage of possible mistakes automatically increases. But such games afford everyone much greater pleasure...'

With his bold play Tal won himself millions of admirers throughout the world and the fame of a restless poet, who effortlessly overthrew the seemingly unshakeable foundations of the positional school (the pillars of which were Botvinnik and Smyslov). He undoubtedly personified the brightest hopes of the post-Stalin society – this was an unprecedented level of freedom!

'This Boy will go far!'

Misha, the second son in the family of Nekhemiya Tal, a well-known doctor in Riga, was a genuine *wunderkind*: at the age of three he was already reading, at five he was multiplying three-figure numbers in his head, and he had an extraordinary memory and perfect musical pitch. He went straight into the third class at school and entered the philological faculty of the Latvian University at the age of 15. He learned to play chess when he was seven (his father played at first category strength), and attended the chess club in the Pioneers Palace from the age of nine. At 14 he first played in the Latvian Championship and at 17 he became a master.

Tal made his debut in big-time chess in 1955-56, unexpectedly winning one of the semi-finals of the 23rd USSR Championship and sharing 5th-7th places in the final (only a point behind the winners – Taimanov, Averbakh and Spassky). Not at all bad for a start, but the main thing was that everyone noticed the extraordinary talent of the 19-year-old player from Riga. Levenfish even called him the most colourful figure of the championship: 'He is an exceptionally capable tactician and he calculates combinations with staggering rapidity. From the very first rounds Tal won the sympathy of the public with his striving for sharp and complicated play... We are witnessing a great talent.'

The press praised him for his optimism, inspiration, tactical awareness, bold attacks and resourcefulness in defence, but criticised him for 'his restricted creative views: in Tal's play there is a great deal of risk, but often it is unfounded, and sometimes the attacks do not stem from the demands of the position.' (Romanovsky)

The following game, played at the finish of that championship, is very typical in this respect. It became a clear signal for the chess elite and the experts: a new and terrible force had appeared, threatening to conquer the entire chess world!

Game 121
M.Tal-A.Tolush
USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1956, 17th round
Sicilian Defence B97

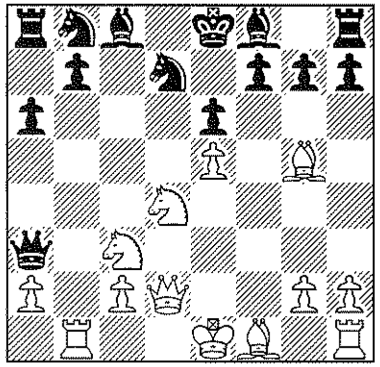
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♕b6 8 ♕d2 ♕xb2

The so-called Poisoned Pawn Variation, one of the sharpest in the Sicilian Defence, had only just been conceived at that time, and each new duel gave a powerful impulse to the development of opening theory. It goes without saying that Tal rushed into the unknown with unbridled enthusiasm!

9 ♖b1 ♕a3 10 e5?!

An unprepared attack. Later on, recognising the drawbacks to the early e4-e5, White began playing 10 f5 or 10 ♗e2.

10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘fd7



12 ♘e4?!

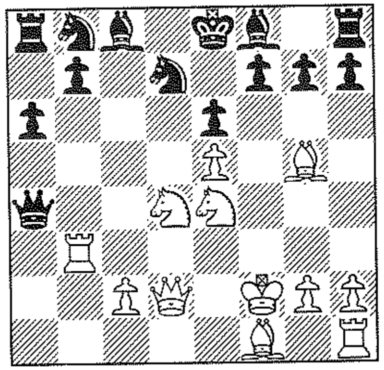
This ambitious move was later condemned, while 12 ♗c4 (Keres-Tolush, 24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957) was successfully combated in the 1960s by Fischer – the most ardent supporter of the Najdorf.

12...♕xa2?

White's idea can be refuted by 12...h6! 13 ♗h4 (if 13 ♗b5!? both 13...axb5 14 ♘xb5 hxg5 15 ♘xa3 ♖xa3 and 13...hxg5 14 ♖b3 axb5! 15 ♖xa3 ♗xa3 are suitable) 13...♕xa2

14 ♖b3 ♕a1+ 15 ♔f2 ♕a4 and the vulnerability of the bishop at h4 makes all the typical sacrifices ineffective. For example: 16 ♗b5 axb5 17 ♘xb5 ♗c5+ 18 ♘xc5 ♕xh4+ 19 g3 ♕d8 20 ♕d6 ♘xc5! 21 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 22 ♕xc7 ♘ba6 with advantage to Black (Korchnoi-Tolush, 25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958).

13 ♖b3 ♕a1+ 14 ♔f2 ♕a4



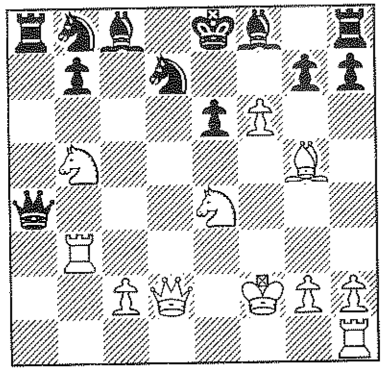
15 ♗b5?!

Intuitively sensing that the position demands a sacrifice, Tal immediately sacrifices – at just the right moment, but... the wrong piece and on the wrong square! Soon afterwards they found 15 ♘xe6!! fxe6 16 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 17 ♕xd6 ♖f8+ 18 ♔g3 with a very strong attack. Here are a few variations: 18...♘f6 (18...♖f7? 19 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 20 ♗c4 is totally bad) 19 exf6 gxf6 20 ♗c2 fxg5 (after 20...♘d7 21 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 22 ♗f4 ♕c6 23 ♕xc6 bxc6 24 ♖d1 Black, despite his extra pawn, has an unenviable endgame, but now his king becomes the target of a pursuit by the heavy pieces) 21 ♗h5+ ♖f7 22 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♖f1+ ♔g6 24 ♖b4! ♕xc2 25 h4! ♕c3+ 26 ♔h2 h5 (26...♘c6 27 ♕f8! ♕e5+ 28 ♔h1 is also hopeless) 27 ♖f3 ♕g7 28 hxg5 and wins.

15...axb5 16 ♘xb5 ('hinting' at ♘c7 mate)

16...f6 17 exf6

Also giving up the knight at e4. The standard evaluation of the position has to give way to intuition and calculation. There is no mate and it would seem that, based on the strict canons of higher chess truth, White must sooner or later lose. But what is the practical significance of this 'higher chess truth', if the variations confirming it are found only months or even years later?!



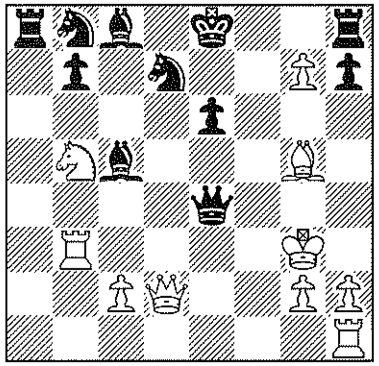
17...gxf6?

This natural capture was deemed a mistake, but also 17...♘xf6 'retaining good resources' (Tal) was little better: 18 ♘xf6+ gxf6 19 ♘c7+ (or 19 ♗xf6 ♗c5+ 20 ♔e1 ♕e4+ 21 ♔d1 e5 22 ♘c7+) 19...♔f7 20 ♗xf6! (completely exposing the black king, whereas 20 ♘xa8? leaves White material down and without an attack: 20...♗c5+ 21 ♗e3 ♗xe3+ 22 ♕xe3 ♕xa8 23 ♕c5 ♘d7 24 ♕h5+ ♔e7) 20...♗c5+ 21 ♔e1 ♕e4+ 22 ♔d1 e5 23 ♘xa8. It is here that the real adventures begin:

1) 23...♔xf6? 24 ♕h6+! (but not 24 ♖f1+? ♔g6 25 ♖g3+ ♗g4+ and Black wins: 26 ♔c1 ♗b4! 27 ♕d3 ♕xd3 28 cxd3 ♔h5 or 26 ♖ff3 ♘c6 27 h3 h5 28 hxg4 h4! 29 ♖f5 ♗e7 30 ♖h5 ♖d8 31 ♖h6+ ♔g7 32 ♖d3 ♕xg4+ 33 ♔e1 ♗g5 etc.) 24...♕g6 (or 24...♔f7 25 ♖f1+ ♔e8 26 ♖d3!, shutting the cage: 26...♕g4+ 27 ♖ff3; 26...♗g4+ 27 ♔c1 ♘d7 28 ♕g7 ♖f8 29 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 30 ♘c7+ ♔d8 31 ♘e6+! ♔c8? 32 ♕xf8+ ♘xf8 33 ♖d8 mate! or 31...♗xe6 32 ♕xf8+ ♔c7 33 ♕d6+ etc.) 25 ♖f1+ ♗f5 (25...♔e6 26 ♕h4! with a mass of threats, or 25...♔e7 26 ♕h4+ ♔e8 27 ♘c7+ ♔d7 28 ♖f6! ♕g8 29 ♘e6 ♕xe6 30 ♖xe6 ♔xe6 31 ♕c4+ ♔d6 32 ♖d3+ ♔c6 33 ♕d5+ ♔b6 34 ♖b3+ and wins) 26 ♕h4+ ♔e6 27 ♖g3 ♗xc2+ 28 ♔d2 and both kings are in danger, but Black's is in more trouble;

2) 23...♗g4+! (this preliminary check makes a great difference!) 24 ♔c1 ♔xf6 25 ♕h6+ ♕g6 26 ♖f1+ ♔e6 27 ♕d2 ♖c8 (the insipid 27...♕g7? leads to disaster: 28 ♘b6 ♗d4 29 c3 ♗xb6 30 ♖xb6+ ♘c6 31 c4! ♖b8 32 c5 ♕e7 33 ♕a2+ ♔d7 34 ♖f7) 28 ♘b6 ♗xb6 29 ♖xb6+ ♖c6 30 ♖xb7 ♖d6 31 ♕c3 ♘d7 and the resulting position needs to be played, not evaluated...

In my view, it was best to eliminate the centralised knight immediately, in order to then combine defence and counterattack: 17...♕xe4! 18 fxg7 ♗c5+ 19 ♔g3.

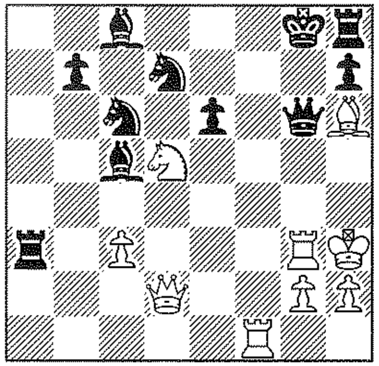


Analysis diagram

It is not hard to guess why Tolush, who was also a brilliant master of attack, avoided this continuation: the black king faces a very dangerous journey and it appears that it will be unable to withstand the onslaught of the splendidly mobilised white army. Indeed, that was the opinion of Tal and other commentators after the game. However, the gloomy evaluation, given by 'man', proves incorrect when the 'machine' is switched on. In the end, Black's two(!) extra pieces and the open position of the white king outweigh White's strong, but temporary threats:

1) 19...♕e5+ 20 ♔h3 ♕xg7 21 ♘c7+ ♔f7 22 ♖f1+ ♔g8 23 ♗h6 (here Tal cuts short the variation with the words 'and it is hard for Black to defend') 23...♕g6 24 ♖g3 ♖a3 25 c3 ♘c6 (for the moment this is all forced) 26 ♘d5!? (probably the best chance: the knight comes into play, aiming at e7, f6 or f4).

In this slightly crazy position Black is ready to give up queen for rook at g6, retaining a decisive material advantage; moreover, the imprisoned rook at h8 will suddenly become very active. Therefore White aims to keep the enemy king 'encaged' for as long as possible, by creating various mating threats.



Analysis diagram

Black has to perform a minor miracle – normal moves no longer have any point:

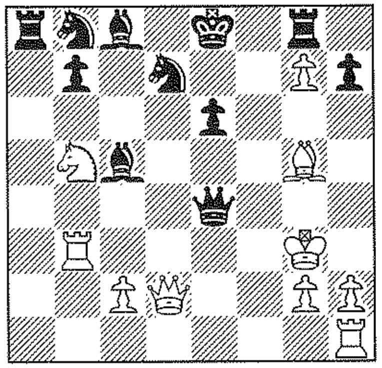
a) 26...e5? (greetings to the white king from the bishop at c8) 27 ♖xg6+ (now this is good: the critical e5-square is inaccessible to the black knights) 27...hxg6 28 ♕g5 ♘f6+ 29 g4 ♗xg4+ 30 ♔h4 ♗f5 31 ♖xf5 ♖a4+ 32 ♔h3 ♖xh6+ 33 ♕xh6 gxf5 34 ♕g6+ ♔f8 35 ♕xf6+ ♔e8 36 ♕xf5 and White, after overcoming certain technical difficulties, should win;

b) 26...♘ce5? (it would appear that everything is defended...) 27 ♕d4!! The black king, driven into the corner and surrounded by its entire retinue, faces inevitable reprisal: 27...♖xc3 (a clever trick, but it fails to save Black) 28 ♘e7+! ♗xe7 29 ♕xc3 ♗f6 30 ♕xc8+ ♔f7 31 ♖xg6 ♖xc8 32 ♖g7+ ♔f8 (32...♔e8 33 ♖g8+) 33 ♖xd7+ ♔e8 34 ♖xh7, or 27...♗d6 (a desperate attempt to retain control of the e7- and f8-squares) 28 ♘f6+! ♘xf6 29 ♖xf6 ♕xg3+ 30 hxg3 ♖a1 31 ♔h2 and the rook at h8 is immured for ever;

c) 26...♖a4!! Here is the miracle – an unobtrusive, quiet move of enormous destructive power! By taking control of the fourth rank, Black restores the coordination of his pieces and creates dangerous threats to the white king, e.g. 27 ♖g5 ♖e4! 28 ♖xg6+ (now is the time – after 28 ♕d3 the magical rook rescues Black: 28...♖g4!! 29 ♖xg4 ♕xg4+ 30 ♔xg4 ♘de5+) 28...hxg6 29 ♕g5 ♘ce5 30 ♕d8+ ♔h7 31 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 32 ♕xf6 ♖g8 33 ♗f4 ♖f8 and White's attack peters out. Black is also winning after 27 ♖xg6+ hxg6 28 ♕g5 ♘de5 29 ♘f6+ ♔f7 30 ♘d7+ ♔e8 31 ♘xc5 (for an instant White is even material ahead) 31...♖c4! (again a quiet rook move changes everything!) 32 ♘d3 ♘f7 (32...♖xc3 33 ♖f3 is not so clear). Finally, after 27 ♘f4 there is the murderous reply 27...♘b6!, opening the c8-h3 diagonal for the bishop, and after 28 ♖xg6+ (or 28 ♘xg6 e5+ 29 ♖g4 hxg6) 28...hxg6 29 ♘xg6 e5+ 30 g4 ♖xg4 31 ♘xh8 both the crude 31...♖d4+ and the more aesthetic 31...♗e7 are decisive, according to taste.

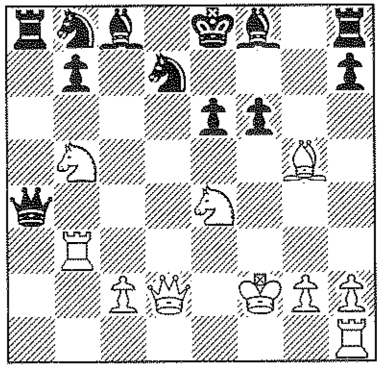
However, the variations with 19...♕e5+ that we have examined are too complicated for both 'man' and 'machine' to be able to draw final conclusions. I would not begin to assert that White has used all of his attacking potential. However, Black has another possibility of casting doubts on his opponent's ultra-aggressive play.

2) 19...♖g8!



This looks suicidal in view of 20 ♖e1 with a catastrophe on e6, but after 20...♘f6!! the time has come to sympathise with the king on g3: 21 ♗xf6 (21 ♖xe4 ♘xc4+) 21...♖xg7+! 22 ♗xg7 ♕g6+ 23 ♔f3 ♕xg7 24 ♕f4 ♘a6 25 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 26 ♕xd6 ♕f8+ and White, forgetting about his wonderful attack, has to try and save a highly unpleasant endgame. If instead 20 ♘c7+, then 20...♔f7 21 ♖f3+ ♔xg7 22 ♖e1 ♗d6+! 23 ♔h3 (it is fatal to play 23 ♕xd6 ♕xe1+ 24 ♔h3 ♔h8 25 ♕e7, and here not 25...♕e5? 26 ♖f7 ♖a3+ 27 g3 ♖g7 28 ♖f8+ ♖g8 29 ♖f7 with a draw, but 25... h6! 26 ♖f7 ♖a3+ 27 ♕xa3 hxg5, mating) 23...♕xf3+ (the simplest) 24 gxf3 ♗xc7 25 ♕c3+ ♔f7 26 ♕xc7 ♖xg5 27 ♕xc8 ♖g8 28 ♕xb7 ♖a5 29 ♖e4 ♖h5+ 30 ♖h4 ♖gg5 31 ♖xh5 ♖xh5+ 32 ♔g3 ♖c5 and the endgame is no less unpleasant for White than the previous one.

Having convinced ourselves that the sacrifice 15 ♗b5?! was incorrect, let us finally return to the game and see why such a seemingly quite natural move as 17...gxf6? did not work out for Black.



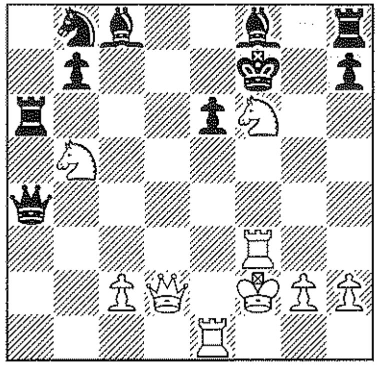
18 ♖e1!!

A brilliant flash of genius, after which White is now out of the danger zone (if, of course, one can say such a thing about this game!): his king is comparatively safe and all his pieces are in play. The combination of these factors is the best insurance policy in such positions.

18...♖a6!

The only sensible defence. Black loses quickly after 18...fxg5? 19 ♘c7+ ♔f7 20 ♖f3+ ♘f6 (20...♔g8 21 ♕xg5+ ♗g7 22 ♘xe6) 21 ♖xf6+ ♔g8 22 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 23 ♕d8+ etc.

19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘xf6+ ♔f7 21 ♖f3!



Terrifying, wouldn't you agree? Impending over the black king is the deadly threat of a discovered check.

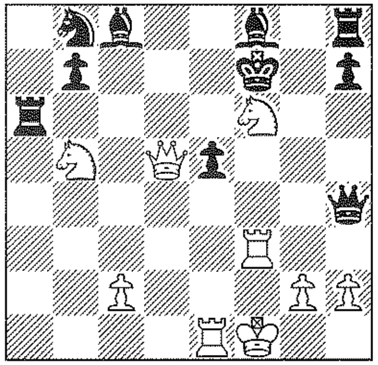
21...♕h4+

Of course, not 21...♕xb5? 22 ♘d5+ ♔e8 (22...♔g6 23 ♖f6+ and mate) 23 ♘c7+, winning the queen. But the tempting 21...♗c5+? would also have been a serious mistake: 22 ♔g3 (here the king feels quite comfortable and it can permit its army to continue the offensive) 22...h6 (preventing 23 ♕g5) 23 ♖e5! (White calmly intensifies the pressure, demonstrating the power of his position) 23...♖c6 (or 23...♕xb5 24 ♘d5+ with the same tragic outcome) 24 ♘g4+! (an unexpected and very strong leap: when attacking, never forget to cover your own king!) 24...♔e8 (but not 24...♔g7? 25 ♖g5+! hxg5 26 ♕xg5+) 25 ♖xc5! ♖xc5 26 ♘d6+ ♔d7 27 ♘f7+ ♖d5 28 ♘f6+ ♔c6 29 ♖c3+! ♔b5 30 ♘xd5 ♖g8+ 31 ♔f2 exd5 (or 31...♕h4+ 32 ♔g1 exd5 33 ♕xd5+, mating: 33...♔a6 34 ♖a3+ ♔b6 35 ♕a5+ ♔c6 36 ♖c3+ ♔d7 37 ♖c7+ etc.) 32 ♕xd5+ ♔a6 33 ♕d6+ b6 34 ♖a3 with an easy win.

22 ♔f1 e5!

By activating his rook at a6 and bishop at c8, Black sharply increases his defensive potential. The impulsive 22...♕c4+? would have merely driven the white king into its usual residence (the black monarch can only dream of this!): 23 ♔g1 ♕c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♔e7 25 ♖c3 ♕xb5 26 ♘d5+ ♕xd5 27 ♕xd5 with material equality and a powerful attack.

23 ♕d5+



23...♗e6

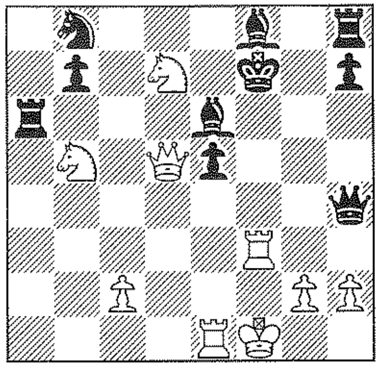
Again the only defence. After 23...♔g6? 24 ♘e8!! the orchestra of rooks and knights, conducted by the queen, gives a highly artistic performance:

1) 24...♗g4 25 ♘bd6! ♘d7 (the knight belatedly remembers its duties to the crown!) 26 ♕e4+ ♔h5 27 h3!! (after the bishop moves from g4, the black king will have nowhere to hide) 27...♖a4 (it is no better to play 27...♗xf3 28 ♕xf3+ ♔h6 29 ♘f5+ or 27...♗xd6 28 hxg4+ ♕xg4 29 ♖f5+ ♔h4 30 g3+! ♕xg3 31 ♖e3+ ♔h4 32 ♕h1+) 28 hxg4+ ♕xg4 29 ♘f6+! ♘xf6 30 ♕xe5+ ♕g5 31 ♖f5 ♗h6 32 ♘f7! and the curtain comes down;

2) 24...♔h6 25 ♘bd6 (the same manoeuvre, cleaving the opposing camp in two) 25...♗xd6 26 ♘xd6 ♕xh2 (26...e4 27 ♕d4! ♖g8 28 ♖xe4 is even worse) 27 ♖f6+ ♔g5 28 ♘e4+ ♔h4 29 ♖xa6 and Black has a painful choice between mate after 29...♘xa6 30 g3+ ♔g4 (30...♔h3 31 ♘f2+ ♔xg3 32 ♕xe5+) 31 ♕d1+ ♔f5 32 ♕f3+ ♔e6 33 ♕f6+ ♔d5 34 ♕d6+ ♔c4 35 ♕d3+ ♔b4 36 ♖b1+ and a slow, agonising death in a hopeless endgame via 29...♖f8+ 30 ♖f6 ♖xf6+ 31 ♘xf6 ♕f4+ 32 ♕f3 etc.

24 ♘d7+

Usually such checks kill instantly, but here by some miracle Black is still alive.



24...♔g6?

The wrong way! After 24...♔e7 the wretched king, supported by its subjects, could have hoped to survive the storm. It would appear that White has nothing better than 25 ♕c5+ ♔e8 26 ♖xf8+ (26 ♕c8+ ♔e7) 26...♖xf8+ 27 ♕xf8+ ♔xd7 28 ♖d1+ ♔c6 29 ♕d6+ ♔xb5 30 ♖b1+ ♔a4 31 ♖a1+ ♔b5 32 ♖b1+ with perpetual check.

25 ♘e5+ ♔g7

It was worth trying to confuse matters with 25...♔h5, although I have no doubt that Tal would have found 26 ♕d1!! (with the threat of a discovered check; the 'queen plus rook' battery carries a nuclear charge!) 26...♗c4+ 27 ♔g1 ♗c5+ 28 ♔h1 ♔h6 (the checks are over, and the king begins to flee, but cannot find a haven) 29 ♕c1+ ♔g7 30 ♖f4 ♖a1 31 ♕xa1 ♕xf4 32 ♘g4+ (32 ♘xc4+ is also good enough) 32...♔g8 33 ♘f6+ ♔f7 34 ♘h5 ♕g5 35 ♕xh8 ♗xb5 36 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 37 ♕xb7 and together with Black's last pawns, his last hopes also disappear.

26 ♖g3+ ♕xg3

This is sadly necessary, as otherwise there is a quick mate: 26...♔h6 27 ♘f7+ ♗xf7 28 ♕d2+ ♔h5 29 ♖c5+.

27 ♕xb7+ ♘d7 28 hxg3 ♖b6 29 ♕c7 ♗c5 (29...♖xb5 30 ♘xd7 ♖f5+ 31 ♔g1 also fails to save Black) **30 ♘xd7 ♗c4+** (a spite check) **31 ♖e2 1-0**

Black lost on time. A gripping encounter with a mass of highly interesting variations.

It is possible that, after studying this game, some will merely shrug their shoulders: it was a pure gamble! But I think that for the majority of players it would be rather terrible to encounter such hurricane-like chess at the board...

Soon afterwards Tal made his first appearance abroad, in Sweden, where he played on board three (after Korchnoi and Polugayevsky) for the USSR team in the student world championship – 6 out of 7. There, most notably, he crushed the 1951 world junior champion, grandmaster Ivkov, who later published an article with the prophetic heading: 'Tal! Remember this name!'

And early in 1957 Misha accomplished another powerful leap, winning the 24th USSR Championship. After starting with 4 out of 4(!), in the end the 20-year-old master finished ahead of a dozen venerable grandmasters. Among those he defeated were his idols Bronstein and Keres – the second and third prize-winners, as well as Taimanov, Petrosian and again Tolush (who said after the game to Spassky: 'You know, Borya, today I lost to a genius'). It was then that Flohr uttered his historic phrase: 'This boy will go far!'

About the following game, which was labelled by Euwe as the most brilliant draw in the history of chess, Tal later said: 'I very much like receiving prizes for brilliancy, as a co-author. There have been four such games in my career, but this was the first, and it afforded me the greatest pleasure.'

Game 122

M.Tal-L.Aronin

USSR Championship,
Moscow 1957, 17th round
Queen's Gambit Declined D40

1 d4!? (Aronin had only prepared for 1 e4) **1...d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 e3**

According to Tal, he avoided 4 cxd5 since he was afraid of the Schara-Hennig Gambit (4...cxd4). A typical feature of his style – don't concede the initiative under any circumstances!

4...♘f6 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 a3 ♗d6 (6...a6; 6...cxd4) **7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 b4 ♗d6**

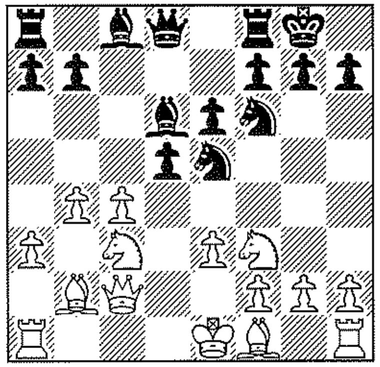
Maintaining the struggle for the e5-square. The famous Capablanca-Janowski duel (*Volume 1, Game No.77*) went 8...♗e7, after which 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♗e2 is the most accurate.

9 ♗b2 0-0 10 ♕c2!?

In the game Botvinnik-Tal (Moscow 12th matchgame 1960) after 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♘b5 ♗b8 12 ♗e2 a5 (12...♕e7!? and ...♖d8 is quieter) 13 bxa5 ♘xa5 14 0-0 ♖a6 15 ♗e5! White retained a minimal advantage.

10...♘e5

Tal recommended 10...a5!?, after which he was planning the cautious 11 bxa5 with equality, although 11 b5 ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 c5 is more interesting and if 13...♕e7, then 14 ♘a4 with a queenside bind. However, Aronin did not even imagine that his opponent had queenside castling in mind!



11 0-0-0!

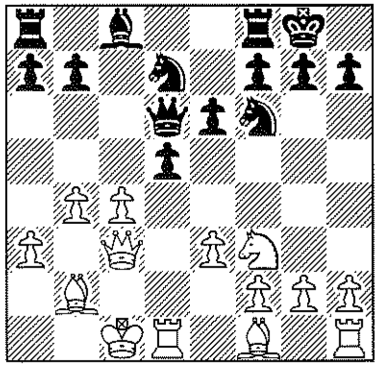
Again typical Tal: a desperate struggle for the initiative! However, this is now practically forced. Of course, 11 c5?! ♗c7 is unfavourable for White.

11...♕e7?!

I would have preferred the immediate 11...a5! here. White was intending to continue 12 c5 ♗c7 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 f4 ♗c7 15 ♗d3 axb4 16 axb4 b6 17 g4 bxc5 18 bxc5 'with sharp play'. (Tal) In my opinion, this variation is unconvincing, since 18...♗a6! 19 g5 ♗xd3 20 ♖xd3 ♘d7 21 ♘b5 ♖a5 leads to an advantage for Black. Instead of 17 g4? the paralysing move 17 c6! is much stronger. But on the other hand, instead of 16...b6?! it is better to play 16...♗d7! 17 g4 ♘xg4 18 ♖dg1 f5, indeed with a sharp, unclear game.

But Aronin considered 11...♕e7 to be the only reply, which is not surprising: it was not easy to find his way after the stunning move 11 0-0-0! – in the Botvinnik era they just didn't play like that...

12 ♘b5! ♘ed7 (the opening of the g-file after 12...♘xf3?! 13 gxf3 did not suit Black) **13 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 14 ♕c3**



With the direct threat of g2-g4. It only needed Black to delay slightly, make only one limp move, allowing the exchange of his strong d6-bishop for a knight – and White, with his menacing long-range bishop at b2, has gained the better position.

14...♖e8 15 g4 ♕f8!

A solid defence! If 15...e5?! there would have followed 16 g5 ♘e4 17 ♕c2 with the threats of ♖xd5 and ♕xe4.

16 ♗d3 (16 g5 is premature in view of 16...♘e4 17 ♕c2 a5! etc.) **16...♘b6**

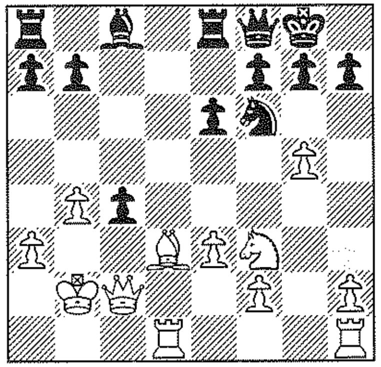
Black finds a way of getting rid of the b2-bishop. Instead 16...♘xg4?! 17 ♖hg1 was very dangerous, while after 16...e5 Tal had prepared 17 g5 ♘h5 18 cxd5! e4 19 ♗e2 exf3 20 ♗xf3, and if 16...dxc4 then 17 ♕xc4 ♘b6 18 ♕c5! 'with advantage in the endgame (two strong bishops!)'.

17 g5 ♘a4 18 ♕c2

Tal also considered 18 gxf6, but this queen sacrifice is hardly serious in view of 18...♘xc3 19 fxg7 ♕e7 20 ♗xc3 dxc4 21 ♗c2 f6 followed by ...e6-e5 (Aronin).

18...♘xb2 19 ♔xb2 dxc4

Removing the double attack on h7. The critical moment of the game has arrived.



20 gxf6?

An instantaneous, sharp reply – and in my opinion, a poor move! For some reason none of the commentators pointed out that the quiet 20 ♕xc4! ♘d5 21 ♘e5 was better, when White has an enduring advantage with level material: Black has a 'bad' bishop at c8, he cannot get at the white king (if ...a7-a5 there is always b4-b5), and White is threatening 22 ♕e4 g6 23 h4 or 22 ♕h4 g6 23 ♘g4 etc.

20...cxd3 21 ♕xd3 e5!

Black would have lost ignominiously after 21...gxf6? 22 ♕d4 ♕h6 23 ♖hg1+ ♔h8 24 ♕d8!, or 22...e5 23 ♖hg1+ ♔h8 24 ♕h4 ♖e6 25 ♕h6!, but now the position is unclear.

22 ♘g5?!

Again a reckless, double-edged move. Taking account of my subsequent finds, 22 ♕e4!? g6 (22...a5 23 b5) 23 ♖hg1 ♖e6 24 ♕h4 came into consideration.

22...g6 23 h4?

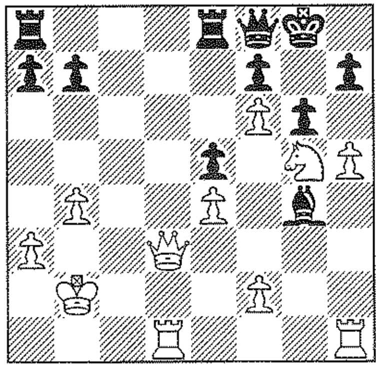
An 'automatic' attacking move, but first the bishop should have been deprived of the g4-square (23 ♕d6? h6 and ...♗g4! was even worse). Tal did not want to waste time on 23 ♖dg1, which he rejected because of 23...♗e6 24 h4 ♖ed8 (24...♖ad8!?) – I agree, 25 ♘xe6 fxe6 26 ♕e2 ♕xf6 27 h5 e4+ 28 ♔b1 g5 is unattractive for White.

However, in my opinion, it is even stronger for Black to play 23...a5!? 24 h4 axb4 25 h5 ♗f5! (instead of Tal's 25...♖xa3? 26 hxg6 ♖xd3 – 26...hxg6 27 ♕e4 – 27 gxf7+ ♕xf7 28 ♘xh7+! ♔h8 29 ♘g5+ ♔g8 30 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 31 ♘xf7+ ♔h7 32 ♖g7 mate), and it is not White who is playing for a win, but Black: 26 e4 ♖xa3 27 hxg6 ♖xd3 28 gxf7+ ♕xf7 29 ♘xf7+ ♔xf7 30 exf5 ♔xf6 or 26 ♕xf5 gxf5 27 ♘e6+ ♔h8 28 ♘xf8 bxa3+ 29 ♔a2 ♖xf8 with an obvious advantage.

I think that all that remained for White was 23 ♖hg1! with the hope of creating sufficient counterplay after 23...♗e6 (23...a5 24 b5) 24 h4.

23...♗f5! (the advantage is now with Black!) **24 e4** (24 ♕d5?! h6) **24...♗g4 25 h5!**

Now White can only go forward, since after 25 f3 ♗h5 or 25 ♖c1 ♖ad8 26 ♕e3 ♕d6 his hopes are completely dashed.



25...♖ad8?

It was much stronger to play 25...♖ed8! 26 hxg6! (but not 26 ♕xd8? ♖xd8 27 hxg6 fxg6! 28 ♖xh7 ♕xf6 29 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 30 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 31 ♘f7+ ♔g7 32 ♘xd8 ♗c8 and wins) 26...♖xd3 (if 26...hxg6?, then 27 ♕xd8! ♖xd8 28 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 29 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 30 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 31 ♘xd8 is decisive) 27 gxh7+ (forced; not 27 ♖xd3? because of 27...fxg6!) 27...♔h8 28 ♖xd3 and, in the opinion of both players, White has sufficient play for the queen.

After 28 ♖xd3 Aronin considers the variations 28...♗e6 29 ♖g1! ♕h6 (*29...♗c4!? 30 ♖dg3 ♗e2 – G.K.*) 30 ♘xe6 fxe6 31 f7! ♔xh7 (or 31...♖f8 32 ♖d8! ♔xh7 33 ♖g8 ♖xf7 34 ♖h8+ with a draw) 32 ♖gg3! with a draw, and 28...a5 29 ♖g3 axb4 30 ♖xg4 b3! 31 a4! and White cannot lose: 31...♖xa4 32 ♘xf7+.

However, from the computer's point of view, 28...♖c8! is very unpleasant for White, and if 29 ♖g3 then 29...♗e2. To all appearances, after 30 ♖hg1 ♗h5 or 30 f3 ♗c4 Black can successfully defend and should be able to convert his material advantage.

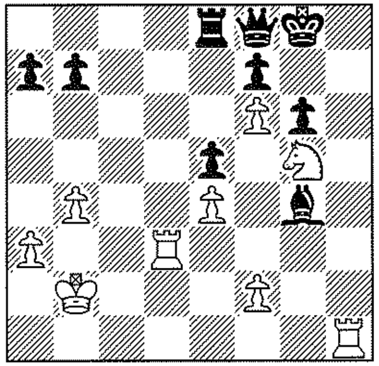
Thus, contrary to existing opinions, Tal did overstep the mark and his reckless attack was insufficient for a draw. Which, however, does nothing to belittle the beauty of the following combination, which became possible thanks to the unfortunate position of the rook at e8.

26 hxg6! ♖xd3

'Not 26...hxg6? 27 ♕xd8! ♖xd8 28 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 29 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 30 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 31 ♘xd8 ♗f3? 32 f7+ ♔f8 33 ♘e6+ ♔xf7 34 ♘g5+ and 35 ♘xf3.' (Tal)

27 ♖xd3 hxg6

This is the difference: here 27...fxg6? is not possible because of 28 f7+!



28 ♖h7!

A highly spectacular move with the terrible threat of 29 f3 ♗e6 (29...♗h5 30 ♖d7!) 30 ♖d2 and ♖dh2.

28...♖c8!

This was considered the only defence (28...♖d8? 29 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 30 ♖h8+! etc.), but it appears that 28...♖e6!? 29 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 would also have saved Black, for example: 30 ♖g7+ ♔h8 31 ♖d1 ♗g4 32 f3 ♗h3 (only not 32...♗xf3? 33 ♖d7 ♕xg7 34 fxg7+ ♔xg7 35 ♖xb7 g5 36 ♔c3 g4 37 ♔d2 ♗xe4 38 ♖xa7 and wins) 33 ♖h1 ♕c8 34 ♖xf7 ♔g8 35 ♖g7+ ♔f8 36 ♖h7 ♗e6 37 ♖g7 ♕c4 38 ♖h8+ ♗g8 39 ♖hxg8+ ♕xg8 40 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 41 ♔c3 b5 42 f4 exf4 43 e5 f3 44 ♔d3 g5 with a draw.

29 f3 ♖c6 30 ♖xf7

'After 30 fxg4? ♖xf6 31 ♖dh3 ♖f2+ 32 ♔b3 ♕d6 Black has winning chances.' (Tal, Aronin) This is correct: 33 ♖h8+ ♔g7 34 ♖3h7+ ♔f6 35 ♖xf7+ ♔xg5 36 ♖xf2 ♕d3+ 37 ♔a2 ♕c4+ 38 ♔a1 ♕b3 etc.

30...♕xf7 31 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 32 fxg4 ♔xf6 33 ♖d7 ♖b6 34 ♔c3 ♔g5 35 a4 a6 36 ♔c4 ♔xg4 ½-½

In view of 37 ♔c5 ♖c6+ 38 ♔d5 ♖b6 39 ♔c5.

It need hardly be said that Tal's rebellious play, intuitive, fearless, and alien to prosaic tournament calculations, won the hearts of chess enthusiasts everywhere...

Meanwhile, the time had come for him to finish his university course, and he soon defended his diploma on the topic 'Satire in the novel *The Twelve Chairs* by Ilf and Petrov'. And in the summer he played for the USSR in the student world championship (8½ out of 10 on board one) and in the 1st European Team Championship (3½ out of 6 on board four).

Typhoon over Zürich

The 'boy' did indeed go far. A few months later he staggered everyone with his victory in the 25th USSR Championship (Riga 1958), winning the decisive game against another young star – Boris Spassky (I will describe this drama in detail in the chapter about Spassky in Volume 3): 1. Tal – 12½ out of 18; 2. Petrosian – 12; 3. Bronstein – 11½; 4. Averbakh – 11; 5-6. Polugayevsky and Spassky – 10½ etc.

The Soviet Championship doubled as a Zonal tournament that year, with the first four qualifying for the Interzonal at Portoroz. Here the young Riga player again came out on top: 1. Tal – 13½ out of 20; 2. Gligoric – 13; 3-4. Benko and Petrosian – 12½; 5-6. Fischer and Olafsson – 12 (the first six all qualified for the Candidates); 7-11. Averbakh, Bronstein, Matanovic, Pachman and Szabo – 11½ etc.

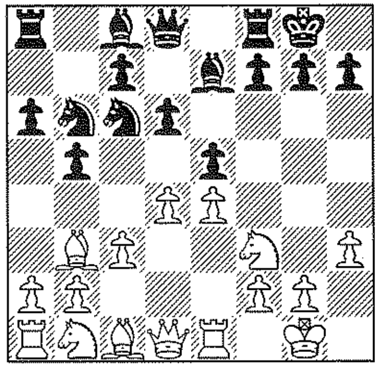
In the following game, one of the most complicated in Tal's career, he was opposed by the talented Argentine grandmaster Oscar Panno, the 1953 world junior champion. In principle, Mikhail, who was leading the event, would have been satisfied to share the point, but with his irrepressible energy, he simply did not yet know how to play for a draw...

Game 123

M.Tal-O.Panno

Interzonal Tournament,
Portoroz 1958, 17th round
Ruy Lopez C92

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘d7 (a popular variation at that time) **10 d4 ♘b6**



An attempt to 'rectify' the Smyslov variation with 10...♗f6 (c.f. p.284), after which White has 11 a4! (not 11 ♗e3?! ♘a5 12 ♗c2 ♘c4 with equality, Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow 21st matchgame 1969) 11...♗b7 12 ♘a3!? with good chances (Kasparov-Karpov, New York/Lyon 12th and 18th matchgames 1990).

11 ♗e3

Again the fashion of that time. A harmless alternative is 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 ♕h5 ♗f6! (this is even better than 13...♕d6 14 ♘d2 ♗e6 with equality, Fischer-Tal, 12th round) 14 ♘d2 ♕e7 15 ♘f1 ♗e6 16 ♘e3 g6 (Fischer-Keller, Zürich 1959). Later on 11 ♘bd2! became the main line.

11...exd4

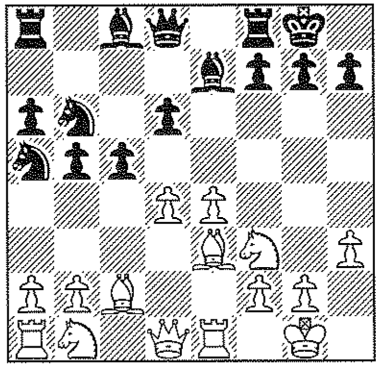
The sixth-round game between Fischer and Bronstein went 11...♖b8 12 ♘bd2 ♗f6 13 d5 (13 ♘f1 ♖e8!) 13...♘a5 14 ♗c2 ♘ac4 15 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 16 ♗c1 c6 with equality. But the following month Tal defeated Darga (Munich Olympiad 1958) with the help of 12 dxe5!? ♘xe5? (12...dxe5!) 13 ♘xe5 dxe5 14 ♕h5 ♕d6 15 ♘d2 ♗f6 16 ♘f3 ♘c4 17 ♖ad1 ♕e7 18 ♗g5!

12 cxd4 ♘a5!

Home preparation! In the game Tal-Antoshin (24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957) White gained a dangerous initiative after 12...d5?! 13 ♘c3 dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♗f5?! 15 d5! ♘a5 16 d6.

13 ♗c2 c5

The critical position of the opening.



14 e5?!

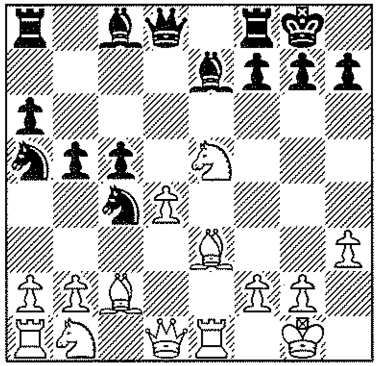
There you have it, Tal's manner of play: who else could have made such an audacious, provocative move? Of course, he did not even consider 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 with equality, whereas after the natural 14 ♘c3 or 14 ♘bd2 he did not like the equalising manoeuvre 14...♘ac4! But the simple 14 b3 was possible, depriving the black knight of the c4-square.

Panno was taken aback and thought for a whole hour here...

14...dxe5!

'Avoiding the traps,' writes Tal. 'After 14...cxd4 15 ♗xd4 the black knights are unable to approach the main battlefield, while to the tempting 14...♘ac4?! 15 exd6 ♕xd6 White had the strong reply 16 ♗g5!' But after this Dvoretsky gives 16...♗xg5 17 ♘xg5 h6! with equality, and recommends 16 ♕d3! with the idea of dxe5.

15 ♘xe5 ♘bc4 (15...♗f6!? 16 ♘c3 ♘bc4 – Dvoretsky)



16 ♕d3

It stands to reason that Tal did not initiate all this for the sake of a draw by 16 ♕h5 g6 17 ♘xg6 fxg6 18 ♗xg6 hxg6 19 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 20 ♕h6+ (20 ♗h6?! is weaker due to 20...♖g8 21 ♕h5 ♕e8!). There could have been a similar outcome after 16...f5!? 17 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 18 ♕f3 cxd4! 19 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 20 ♕xa8 ♗h4 21 ♕f3 ♕xb2 (Dvoretsky) 22 ♘d2! ♕xc2 23 ♕d5+ ♔h8 24 ♕f7! ♗xf2+ 25 ♔h2! ♗c5 26 ♖e8 ♗d6+! 27 ♔h1 ♗e6! 28 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 29 ♕xf8+ ♗g8 30 ♘xc4 bxc4 31 ♖f1 ♕xa2 32 ♖xf5 a5 with a draw.

16...f5

Creating the threats of ...♘xe3, ...♘xb2 and ...♘xe5. 'If 16...g6, then 17 ♗h6 ♖e8 18 ♕f3 or immediately 18 ♘xf7.' (Tal) But 18 ♘xf7?! is dubious on account of 18...♕xd4! And on the other hand, instead of 17...♖e8 it is stronger to play 17...♘xe5! 18 ♖xe5 (18 dxe5?! ♕xd3 19 ♗xd3 ♖d8) 18...♘c6 19 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 20 ♖e1 ♘xd4 with excellent compensation for the exchange.

17 ♗b3!

'Also interesting was 17 ♗f4!? cxd4! (after 17...♘xb2?! 18 ♕c3 ♕xd4 there is the pretty 19 ♗c1!! ♕xc3 20 ♘xc3 ♘a4 21 ♘xa4 bxa4 22 ♗d2 and ♗xa4 with the better endgame) 18 ♘d2 ♗b4!? 19 ♘exc4 bxc4 20 ♘xc4 ♗xe1 21 ♖xe1 ♘xc4 22 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 and White has no more than reasonable compensation for the sacrificed exchange.' (Dvoretsky)

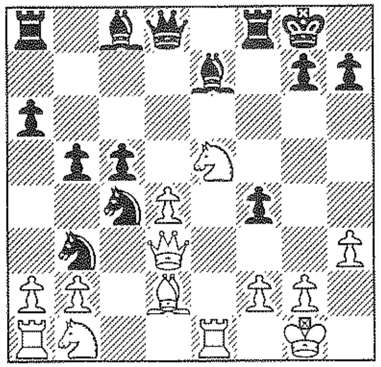
17...f4!?

According to Tal 'after 17...♗e6 18 dxc5 Black would have lost a pawn, but here Dvoretsky correctly considers 18...♘xb3 19 ♕xb3 f4 or 19...♖c8 to be acceptable for Black, and a move earlier – 17...♘xb3!? 18 ♕xb3 cxd4 19 ♘xc4 ♗e6 (19...dxe3) or 17...♗f6!? 18 ♘xc4 ♘xb3! (Tal gives 18...bxc4?! 19 ♗xc4+ ♘xc4 – if 19...♔h8!?, then 20 ♘d2 cxd4 21 ♗f4 is possible – 20 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 21 ♖d1 f4 22 ♗xf4 ♗xd4 23 ♗e3 ♗f5 'with excellent compensation', although after 24 ♗xd4 cxd4 25 ♕xd4 ♕g5 26 ♕e3! White has every chance of converting his extra pawn) 19 ♕xb3 (19 axb3 cxd4!) 19...♗e6!

'With the move in the game Black offers the sacrifice of his queen, but for such a great material equivalent that Panno, in his words, considered his game to be won.' (Tal)

18 ♗d2 ♘xb3!

For the moment Black is equal to the occasion. In the event of 18...♗f5?! 19 ♗xa5 ♕xa5 20 ♕c3 ♕xc3 21 ♘xc3 cxd4 22 ♘xc4 bxc4 23 ♗xc4+ ♔h8 24 ♖xe7 he would have lost a pawn.



19 ♘c6?!

Adding fuel to the fire! 'White accepts the challenge, but evaluates the position, that arises after the combination, differently than his opponent. In the event of 19 ♕xb3 ♗f6 (*it is inferior to play 19...♕d5?! 20 ♘c3 ♕xd4 21 ♖e4 ♕xd2 22 ♘xc4 bxc4 23 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 24 ♖xe7 ♗f5 25 ♖d1 ♕xb2 26 ♕xc5 – G.K.*) 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 he would been in significant difficulties, and interposing 20 ♘a3 would not have helped.' (Tal)

However, 20 ♘a3! would in fact have guaranteed White a draw: 20...♗xe5 (20...♕d5 21 ♘axc4 bxc4 22 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 23 ♘xc4 ♗xd4 24 ♗c3) 21 ♖xe5 ♗e6 22 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 23 ♕f3 cxd4 24 b3, or even 22 ♖xe6 ♘xd2 23 ♕d3 ♕xd4 24 ♕xd4 cxd4 25 ♖d1 b4 26 ♖xd2 bxa3.

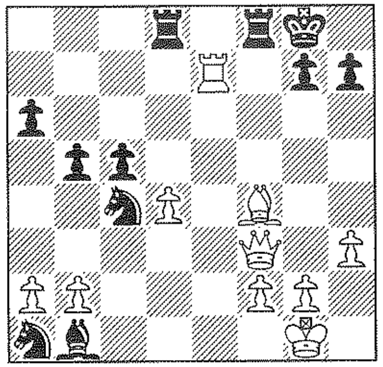
19...♘xa1 20 ♘xd8 ♗f5!

'If 20...♗xd8 White would have continued 21 b3, picking up the knight at a1.' (Tal) Although, in my opinion, after 21...♘xd2 (21...♗f5? 22 ♕f3 ♘xd2 23 ♕xa8 and wins) 22 ♘xd2 ♗f5 23 ♘e4 (23 ♕f3? ♗a5) 23...cxd4! (but not 23...♖e8? 24 dxc5 etc.) 24 ♖xa1 ♗b6 Black would have retained the d4-pawn and roughly equal chances.

The move made by Panno is stronger: Black is playing for a win! 'The game was still going on, but I was already receiving condolences,' recalls Alexander Koblents, for many years Tal's trainer and second. 'The first to come up to me was Bronstein, who quietly said: "Don't be upset if Misha loses today. You'll see, he will gain revenge!" And Simagin, who was sitting beside me, added: "For his sacrificed queen Panno has a whole warehouse of pieces!"'

21 ♕f3 ♖axd8 22 ♖xe7 ♗xb1 23 ♗xf4

An extraordinarily picturesque position! You truly had to be a Tal, to create *this* literally out of nothing...



'Black has a material advantage, but I very much like playing when the opponent's pieces linger on my territory.' (Tal)

23...♖xd4

This is more natural than 23...cxd4 24 b3 ♗g6 (24...♘a3? 25 ♕g4) 25 bxc4 d3, after which White has the powerful 26 ♕g3! (not 26 ♕g4 d2 27 ♖d7 ♖xd7 28 ♕xd7 ♖xf4 29 ♕xd2 ♖xc4 30 ♕d5+ ♔f8 31 ♕a8+ ♔e7 32 ♕b7+ ♔f8 33 ♕xa6, or 29 cxb5 ♖b4 30 ♕xd2 ♖b1 31 ♔h2 axb5 with a draw) 26...d2 (26...♖xf4? 27 ♕xf4 d2 28 ♖xg7+!) 27 ♗xd2 ♖xd2 28 ♕c3! ♖d1+ 29 ♔h2 ♗f7 30 c5! Also interesting is the cunning 26 ♔h2!? with the idea of 26...d2? 27 ♕c3, 26...♖d4? 27 ♖xg7+, or 26...bxc4?! 27 ♕e3! (Dvoretsky) – it would appear that Black is only left with 26...♘c2!

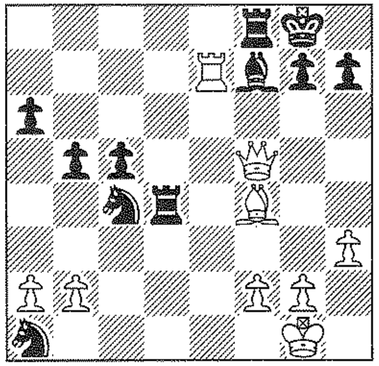
24 ♕g4!

Here 24 ♕g3 is inferior in view of 24...♗g6 25 ♗e5 ♘xe5 26 ♕xe5 ♗f7 27 ♕xc5 ♖d1+ 28 ♔h2 ♗xa2 29 ♕a7 ♗f7 30 ♕xa6 b4 with advantage to Black. Therefore Dvoretsky recommends making a draw by 29 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 30 ♕g5+ (30...♔f7 31 ♕h5+ and ♕xd1).

24...♗g6 25 ♕e6+ ♗f7

'After 25...♔h8?! I was intending to play 26 ♗e5 ♘xe5 27 ♕xe5 ♖g8 28 ♕xc5, when the complete lack of co-ordination of the black pieces allows White to count on further material gains.' (Tal) And indeed, after 28...♘c2 29 ♕a7 ♖d1+ 30 ♔h2 ♖e1 31 ♖xe1 ♘xe1 32 ♕xa6 b4 33 a4 bxa3 34 bxa3 ♘d3 35 f3 his chances are even somewhat better.

26 ♕f5



26...♘c2

'Black correctly hastens to bring up his reserves. If 26...♗g6? the following combination works: 27 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 28 ♗h6+ ♔xh6 29 ♕xf8+ ♔g5 30 ♕xc5+ and 31 ♕xd4.' (Tal)

In my view, Black could also have considered 26...♖d5!? 27 ♕g4 h5 28 ♕g3 ♖d1+ 29 ♔h2 ♘d2 30 ♕g5 ♘f1+ 31 ♔g1 h4 32 ♕xh4 ♘e3+ 33 ♔h2 ♘d5 with a slight advantage. However, it is one matter to find such variations with the help of a computer, and a quite different one at the board...

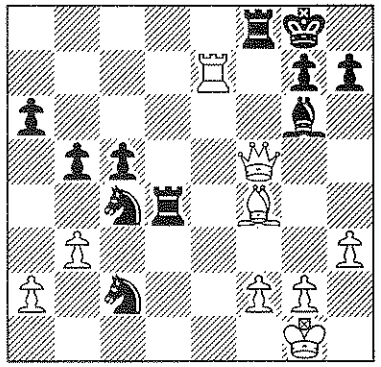
27 b3 ♗g6?!

Allowing White additional chances. Tal judged other replies to be in his favour, but, in my opinion, in the majority of cases the most probable outcome would have been a draw:

1) 27...♖xf4?! 28 ♕xf4 ♘4a3 29 ♕d6! (after 29 ♕e5 c4 30 ♕b2 h6 the three minor pieces should not be inferior to the queen) 29...c4 30 ♕xa6 cxb3 31 axb3 ♗xb3 32 ♖e3! with advantage to White (Dvoretsky);

2) 27...♘4a3 28 ♗e5 ♖d1+ 29 ♔h2 ♖e1 30 f4 (I would have preferred 30 ♕g5!? ♖xe5 31 ♕xe5 c4 32 ♕b2), 'and White will take on e5 with his pawn, obtaining a powerful passed pawn' (Tal); however, things don't come to that – 30...♘e3 31 ♕g5 (31 ♕d7? ♖e2) 31...♘f1+ 32 ♔g1 ♘g3+ 33 ♔h2 (33 ♔f2? ♘e4+) 33...♘f1+ with perpetual check;

3) 27...♖d1+!? 28 ♔h2 ♘d2 29 ♗xd2 (29 h4? ♘f1+ 30 ♔h3 ♘b4! and Black wins) 29...♖xd2 30 ♕xc5 when the uncoordinated black pieces give White hopes, although after 30...♘d4! 31 ♕c3 ♖d1 he is rather the one who has to try and gain a draw.



28 ♖xg7+!

Panno was counting on 28 ♕e6+ ♗f7 with a draw, underestimating Tal's attempt to create an attack even with his lone queen!

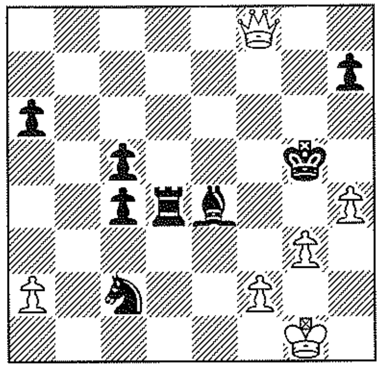
28...♔xg7 29 ♗h6+ ♔xh6 30 ♕xf8+ ♔g5 31 bxc4 bxc4 32 g3!

32 f3!? ♗f5 33 ♔f2 also came into consideration (Dvoretsky). Although the position is drawish, Tal continues attacking as though nothing had happened. This must have stunned Panno, who now slipped into serious time-trouble.

33...♗e4 33 h4+!

'Nothing is gained by 33 f4+ ♔g6 34 g4 h6, when there are no mating threats.' (Tal) A draw would also have resulted from 35 ♕e7!? ♘e3! (but not 35...♖d1+?! 36 ♔f2 ♖d2+ 37

♔g3 ♖d3+ 38 ♔h4) 36 ♕e6+ ♔g7 37 f5 ♘d5 38 ♕g6+ ♔f8 39 ♕xh6+ ♔f7 40 ♕g6+ ♔e7 41 ♕e6+ ♔f8 42 ♕xa6 c3.



33...♔g4

'The natural 33...♔g6 can be met by 34 f3 ♗d3 (34...♗d5?! 35 g4 with the threat of ♕f5+, winning a mass of important tempi) 35 h5+ ♔g5 36 ♕g7+ ♔f5 37 ♕xh7+ or 35...♔xh5 36 ♕f6.' (Tal) However, in the last variation 36...♘e3! gives an immediate draw, since 37 g4+? ♘xg4 38 fxg4+ ♖xg4+ 39 ♔f2 ♖g6 etc. is no good.

In my view, instead of 35 h5+?! it is much stronger to play 35 g4!, when Black's 'bad' king gives him certain problems, for example: 35...h5 36 g5 ♖d7! 37 ♕h6+ ♔f7 38 ♕xh5+ ♔e6 (38...♔g7? 39 ♕h6+ ♔g8 40 ♕xa6) 39 ♕e8+ ♔d6 40 g6 ♘d4 with unclear play.

34 ♔h2 (unexpectedly mate is again threatened – 35 ♕f4+ ♔h5 36 ♕g5) **34...♗f5!**

If 34...♗d5?, then 35 f3+ ♗xf3 36 ♕c8+ ♔h5 37 ♕f5+ ♔h6 38 ♕g5 mate. Now Tal sank into thought...

'The sweat was pouring down Panno's face, and Tal too was deadly tired. But, as usual, at this moment of danger his mind was especially clear and his nerves did not let him down' (from the press).

35 ♕f6!

Continuing the pursuit of the king. After the greedy 35 f3+?! ♔xf3 36 ♕xf5+ ♔e3 37 ♕xh7 (37 ♕xc2?? ♖d2+) 37...c3 the passed c-pawn would have insured Black against any troubles, while if 35 ♕xc5?! he has 35...♖d2! 36 ♕xc4+ ♘d4 (Dvoretsky).

'Here you have another of the characteristic features of the Tal style: the ability to keep creating fresh difficulties for his adversaries. Sometimes the opponent succeeds in repelling a whole series of attacks and in avoiding numerous pitfalls, but the difficult defence so exhausts him that in the end he makes a mistake; sometimes on easy ground. And in the present game Panno "cracked" right at the finishing line.' (Koblents)

35...h6 36 ♕e5 (or 36 ♕xh6 ♔f3 37 ♕f6 ♘e3! 38 fxe3 ♖d2+ – Vukovic) **36...♖e4**

36...♗d3!? 37 ♕f6 (necessary, otherwise the black king breaks through to f3) 37...♗f5, which was not indicated by the commentators, would have given an immediate draw.

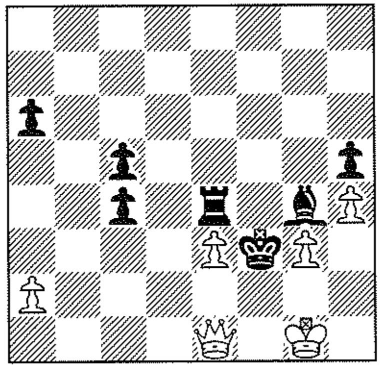
37 ♕g7+ ♔f3

37...♔h5 is also not bad, since after 38 ♕f7+ (or 38 f3 ♖e2+ 39 ♔g1 ♘e3 with a draw – Dvoretsky) 38...♔g4 (38...♗g6?? 39 ♕f3+ and wins) 39 f3+ ♔xf3 40 ♕xf5+ ♔e3 41 ♕xc5+ ♔d3 Black is saved by his c-pawn.

38 ♕c3+ ♘e3

'There was a simpler draw by 38...♔xf2!? 39 ♕xc2+ ♔f3, since White cannot avoid perpetual check.' (Tal)

39 ♔g1 ♗g4 40 fxe3! h5 (with his flag about to fall, Black avoids a couple of cunning traps: 40...♔xg3? 41 ♕e1+ ♔f3 42 ♕f2 mate, or 40...♖xe3? 41 ♕f6+ ♔e2 42 ♕f1+! ♔d2 43 ♕f4 c3? 44 ♔f2 and wins) **41 ♕e1**



41...♖xe3?

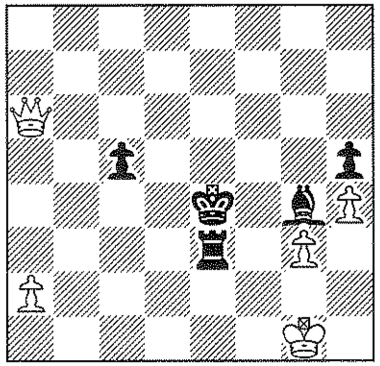
Continuing the time-trouble haste: Panno had not recorded the last few moves, and so he wasn't aware that the time control had already been reached! 'An easy draw would have been given by 41...♖e6! 42 e4 c3, creating a fortress.' (Tal) For example: 43 ♕xc3+ ♔xe4 44 ♕xc5 ♔d3.

42 ♕f1+

The sealed move. Tal and Koblents analysed the adjourned position all night: White had acquired good practical winning chances.

The next day Tal also adjourned his game with Olafsson, in a difficult endgame. On the resumption the Riga player was hoping for at least one point out of two, but he gained one and a half! After this memorable adjournment session the fate of first place in the tournament was decided.

42...♔e4 43 ♕xc4+ ♔f3 44 ♕f1+ ♔e4 45 ♕xa6



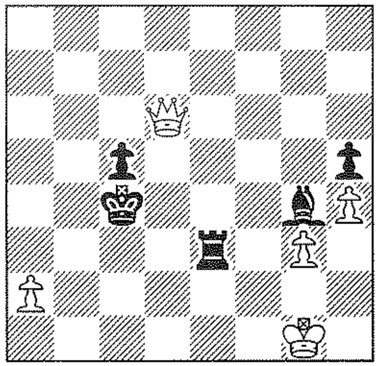
45...♔d4?

The decisive error. Years later the Yugoslav master Vladimir Vukovic found a draw for Black – 45...♖xg3+ 46 ♔f2 ♖f3+! (Tal analysed 46...♖d3 47 ♕c4+ ♖d4 48 ♕c2+ ♔d5 49 a4 ♔c6 50 ♕g6+ ♔b7 51 ♕e8 ♖b4 52 ♔e3 and wins), for example:

1) 47 ♔e1 ♖e3+ 48 ♔d2 ♖e2+ 49 ♔c3 ♖e3+ 50 ♔b2 (50 ♔c4?? ♗e2+) 50...♖e2+ 51 ♔a3 ♖e3+ and the white king has nowhere to hide (52 ♔a4?? ♗d1+);

2) 47 ♔g2 ♔d4 48 ♕d6+ ♔c4 49 a4 ♔b4 50 ♕a6 ♖b3! 51 a5 c4 52 ♕b6+ ♔a4 53 ♕c7 (or 53 ♕a7 c3 54 a6 ♗f3+! 55 ♔f2! ♔a3 56 ♕c5+ ♔b2 57 ♕d4 ♔a2 58 ♕a4+ ♔b2 59 ♕d4 ♔a2 with a draw) 53...♔b5 54 ♔f2 ♔a6 55 ♕d8 ♖f3+ (55...♖b5?? 56 ♕a8 mate) 56 ♔g2 (56 ♔e1 ♖e3+, and 57 ♔d2?? ♖d3+ is not possible) 56...♖b3 57 ♕a8+ ♔b5 with the threats of ...♗f3+ and ...♖a3.

46 ♕d6+ ♔c4



47 a4 (this pawn will cost a rook) **47...♖e1+ 48 ♔f2 ♖e2+ 49 ♔f1 ♖a2 50 ♕a6+ ♔d4 51 a5 c4 52 ♕b6+ ♔d5 53 a6 ♖a1+ 54 ♔f2 c3 55 a7 c2 56 ♕b3+ ♔d6 57 ♕d3+ 1-0**

57...♔e5 or 57...♔c7 – 58 ♕c3+; 57...♔e7 58 ♕xc2 ♖xa7 59 ♕h7+; 57...♔e6 58 ♕xc2 ♖xa7 59 ♕e4+ ♔d6 60 ♕d4+ and ♕xa7.

A very sharp clash, more typical of chess from the end of the 20th century. Tal took a serious risk and appeared to be on the verge of defeat. However, computer analysis shows that he did not play so incorrectly and at any event he was never losing! This indicates his superiority over his contemporaries in the evaluation of open, dynamic positions. He sensed their weaknesses with the tips of his fingers, like a great pianist...

That same autumn Tal played for the USSR team in his first Olympiad (Munich 1958) and achieved the overall best result – 13½ out of 15! There he finally made the acquaintance of Botvinnik, who had recently regained his champion's title after winning the return match against Smyslov. 'Why did you sacrifice a pawn?' the Patriarch asked the young debutant during one of the rounds. 'It was simply in my way,' came the instantaneous reply.

'In Munich Tal often observed how skilfully, with what a deep understanding of the position, Botvinnik analysed adjourned games,' writes Viktor Vasiliev in his remarkable story *The Tal Enigma*. 'Several times he analysed together with Botvinnik, and he learned much in the process. Did the world champion scrutinise him then? Did he guess that one day he would be faced with a difficult fight against this lively young man? Perhaps he did. Because after the Olympiad many began to regard Tal as one of the world champion's main rivals. Max Euwe, for example, declared: "Tal is an outstanding phenomenon in chess. You can believe me: in my time I have seen many talents." And later Euwe repeatedly emphasised that he considered Tal to be a chess genius.'

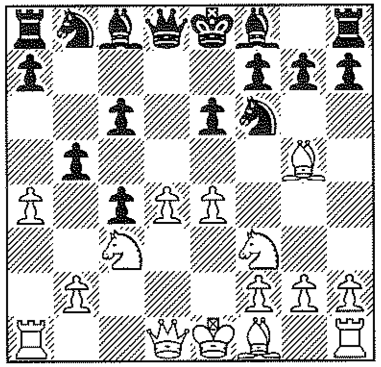
The next year, preparing for the Candidates tournament, he underlined his class in the 26th USSR Championship (1. Petrosian; 2-3. Spassky and Tal) and confidently won the strong international tournament in Zürich: 1. Tal – 11½ out of 15; 2. Gligoric – 11; 3-4. Fischer and Keres – 10½; 5-6. Larsen and Unzicker – 9½ etc.

Here is one of his most impressive games – so complicated and mind-boggling, that Mikhail Nekhemevich gave it in his book *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal* without any notes. 'All the same mistakes cannot be avoided,' thought the author. With the help of the computer I have tried to fill this 'blank spot' in the Tal biography.

Game 124
M.Tal-D.Keller
Zürich 1959
Slav Defence D44

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 d4 c6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 (if 6 a4 ♗b4 7 e4, then 7...c5! 8 ♗xc4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 h6 with equality, Bronstein-Botvinnik, Moscow 24th match-game 1951) **6...b5 7 a4**

Another attempt to avoid the main line of the Botvinnik Variation (7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 etc.).



7...♕b6

The critical line, aimed at holding the pawn, although it is more solid to play 7...♗b7! (7...♗b4?! 8 e5 h6 9 exf6! hxg5 10 fxg7 ♖g8 11 h4! or 7...b4?! 8 ♘b1 ♗e7 9 e5 ♘d5 10 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 11 ♗xc4 is advantageous to White), for example:

1) 8 e5 h6 9 ♗h4 g5 10 exf6 gxh4 11 ♘e5 (11 axb5 cxb5 12 ♘xb5 ♗b4+ 13 ♘c3 ♕xf6 14 ♕a4+ ♘c6 15 ♘e5 ♕f4 16 ♘xc6 ♗xc3+ 17 bxc3 ♕e4+ 18 ♗e2 ♗xc6 with equality, Kir.Georgiev-Nogueiras, Sarajevo 1985; 11 ♗e2 c5!? 12 dxc5 ♘d7 is unclear, Dokhoian-Kuijf, Wijk aan Zee 1989) 11...♘d7! 12 ♕h5 (12 ♗e2 ♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♕c7 14 ♕d4 h3! etc.) 12...♕xf6 13 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 14 axb5 cxb5 15 ♕xb5+ ♗c6 16 ♕xc4 ♗d6 with a comfortable position (Van Wely-Kramnik, Manila Olympiad 1992);

2) 8 axb5 cxb5 9 e5 h6 10 ♗d2 (or 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♘xb5 ♗b4+ 12 ♘c3 fxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘c6 with equality, Osnos-S.Ivanov, USSR 1985) 10...♘e4 11 ♘xb5 ♘xd2 12 ♕xd2 (12 ♘xd2 a6 13 ♘c3 ♕xd4 14 ♘xc4 ♘c6 is also level, Veingold-Oll, Tallinn 1988) 12...♗xf3! 13 gxf3 ♘c6 14 ♖d1 ♕b6 15 ♗xc4

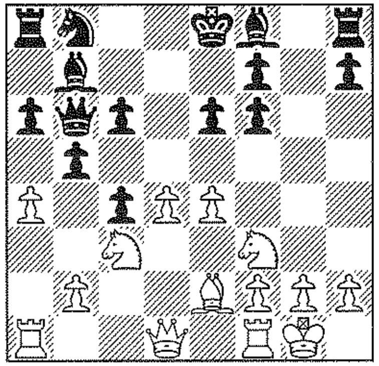
♗b4 16 ♘c3 0-0-0 and ...♖xd4 (Shcherbakov-Novikov, Blagoveshchensk 1988) or 9 ♘xb5 ♗b4+ (9...♕b6!? 10 ♗xc4 ♘xe4) 10 ♘c3 ♗xe4 11 ♗xc4 (11 ♕a4+ ♘c6) 11...0-0 12 0-0, and Black is close to equalising after both 12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♘bd7, and 12...♗b7 (D.Garcia-Kramnik, Pamplona 1992).

8 ♗xf6 gxf6 9 ♗e2 a6

Back in 1946 Bronstein tried 9...♘d7 (little is changed by 9...♗b7 10 0-0) 10 0-0 (10 d5!?) 10...♗b4 (if 10...♗b7 there is the typical undermining move 11 axb5 cxb5 12 b3!) 11 d5 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♘c5 with a double-edged struggle.

10 0-0 ♗b7

Later 10...♘d7 11 d5 occurred. The young Tal was also unable to resist the temptation to break through in the centre.



11 d5!?

Modern 'matadors' prefer 11 b3 cxb3 (perhaps 11...b4 12 a5 ♕c7 13 ♘a4 c3 14 ♘b6 ♖a7 is better) 12 ♕xb3 ♘d7 13 d5! cxd5 14 exd5 with the initiative (Lerner-Kaidanov, Moscow 1985).

11...cxd5

11...b4? 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 a5! ♕d8 (13...♕c7 14 ♘a4) 14 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 15 ♘a4 ♘d7 16 ♗xc4 is not good for Black, but 11...♗c5 (or 11...♘d7!?) comes into consideration, avoiding opening lines and continuing to develop, for example: 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 ♘h4 ♘d7 14 ♗g4 0-0-0 (Farago-Flear, Hastings 1984/85).

12 exd5 b4

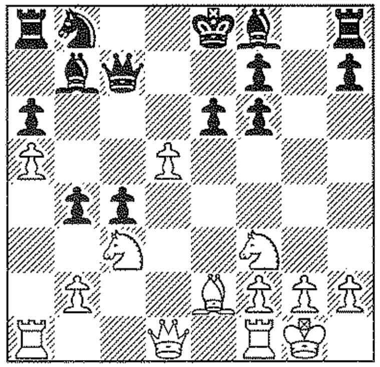
This move represents a natural desire to force the opponent to declare his intentions. 12...♗c5 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 fails to equalise in view of 15 b3! ♗b4 16 ♘a2 ♕a5 17 ♘xb4 ♕xb4 18 bxc4 bxc4 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 ♘d4 with the initiative, but it is possible for Black to play 12...♘d7!? 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 15 ♘d4 ♗c5 16 ♘dxb5 ♘e5 (16...exd5?! 17 b4!), when White's advantage is only slight (Gorelov-Kishnyov, Barnaul 1984).

13 a5!

After 13 dxe6 fxe6 (13...bxc3 14 exf7+ ♔xf7 15 ♗xc4+ ♔g7 16 ♘h4 ♗c8 17 bxc3!? is dangerous for Black) 14 a5 Black can reply 14...♕c6!

13...♕c7!

13...♕d8 is inferior due to 14 dxe6 fxe6 (or 14...♕xd1 15 exf7+ ♔xf7 16 ♗xc4+ ♔g7 17 ♘xd1 ♗xf3 18 gxf3 ♘d7 19 ♘e3) 15 ♘d4 bxc3 16 ♗h5+ ♔e7 17 ♖e1 ♕d7 (17...♗d5? 18 ♘xe6) 18 ♖xe6+ ♔d8 19 ♖e8+ ♕xe8 20 ♗xe8 with an obvious advantage.



14 dxe6!

A typical Tal move: a sharp, intuitive piece sacrifice. The simple 14 ♘a4 looks tempting, for example: 14...♗xd5? 15 ♘b6 or 14...exd5?! 15 ♘b6 ♗c5 (a recommendation of Timman; both 15...♖a7? 16 ♘xd5 and 15...♘d7? 16 ♘xa8 ♗xa8 17 ♘d4 are bad for Black) 16 ♘xd5! (16 ♘xa8 ♗xa8 17 b3! leaves White with a mini-plus) 16...♕d6 17 ♗xc4 0-0 18 ♕d3! (Timman suggested 18 ♘h4 ♔h8) 18...♔h8 19 ♖ad1 ♖g8 20 ♖fe1 and things are bad for Black.

However, after 14...♘d7! 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♖c1 ♕xa5!? (16...♖d8 will also do, but not 16...♗d5?! 17 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 18 b3 ♕xa5 19 ♖xc4) 17 ♗xc4 ♖d8 18 ♕e2 (18 ♘d4 ♖g8) 18...♘e5 Black is alright.

It is obvious that, when he played 11 d5, Tal was already prepared to sacrifice the knight.

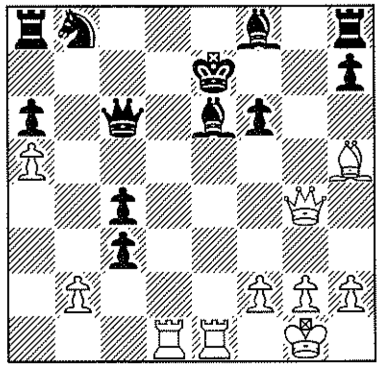
14...bxc3 (15 ♘d4 is also good after 14...fxe6) **15 ♘d4!**

Apparently the strongest continuation, although White could also have considered 15 bxc3!? ♗g7! (but not 15...fxe6? 16 ♘d4 ♗d5 17 ♗h5+ ♔d7 18 ♘xe6! etc.) 16 exf7+ ♔xf7 17 ♖a4 or 16 ♕a4+ ♘c6 17 exf7+ ♔xf7 18 ♗xc4+ ♔f8 19 ♖fb1 with quite good compensation for the piece.

15...♖g8!

Keller is equal to the occasion! There were many ways for him to go wrong here:

1) He would have lost ignominiously after 15...fxe6? 16 ♘xe6 (16 ♗h5+ ♔e7 17 ♖e1 is also good) 16...♕d7 (16...♕c6 17 ♗h5+ ♔e7 18 ♗f3) 17 ♗h5+ ♔e7 18 ♕g4! ♗d5 (18...cxb2? 19 ♖ae1 b1♕ 20 ♖xb1 ♗d5 21 ♖fe1 ♗xe6 22 ♖b7! ♕xb7 23 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 24 ♖d1+ ♔c7 25 ♕f7+) 19 ♖fe1! ♗xe6 20 ♖ad1 ♕c6.



Analysis diagram

21 ♗e8!! (a murderous blow!) 21...♔xe8 (21...h5 22 ♕g6) 22 ♖xe6+ ♗e7 23 ♖xc6 ♘xc6 24 ♕d7+ ♔f7 25 ♕xc6 cxb2 26 ♕xc4+ ♔g7 27 ♕e2 and wins.

2) 15...♘c6? 16 exf7+ ♔xf7 (16...♕xf7 17 ♗h5 0-0-0 18 ♗xf7 ♘xd4 19 ♕a4) 17 ♗xc4+ ♔e8 18 ♕h5+ ♔d7 19 ♗e6+ ♔d6 20 ♕d5+ ♔e7 21 ♗g4 winning.

3) 15...cxb2? 16 exf7+! ♔xf7 (16...♕xf7 17 ♗h5 bxa1♕ 18 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♕h5+ and ♖xa1) 17 ♗h5+ ♔e7 (17...♔g8? 18 ♕g4+ ♗g7 19 ♕e6+) 18 ♖e1+ ♕e5 19 ♖xe5+ fxe5 20 ♖b1 and wins.

4) 15...♗g7?! 16 ♕a4+ ♔f8 (16...♘d7 17 exf7+ ♔xf7 18 ♗xc4+ ♔g6 19 ♕c2+) 17 exf7 ♕d7 18 ♕b4+ ♔xf7 (18...♕e7 19 ♘c6+ ♔xf7 20 ♗h5+ ♔xe6 21 ♖fe1+) 19 ♗h5+ ♔g8 20 ♖ae1! ♗f8 21 ♖e8 ♔g7 22 ♘e6+ ♕xe6 23 ♕xb7+, and again White wins.

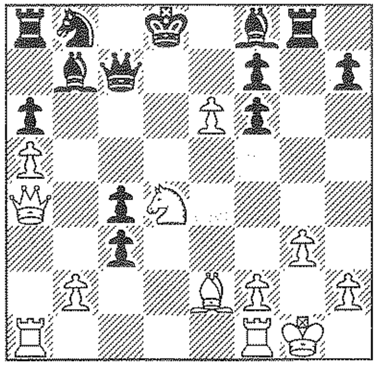
5) Finally, if 15...♗d5, then White has 16 ♗f3! (after 16 ♗h5!? Black can play 16...♗c5 17 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 18 bxc3 ♘c6 with sharp play) 16...♕c5! (16...fxe6? 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♖e1+ etc.; 16...♗xf3? 17 ♕xf3 ♖a7 18 ♕xf6 ♖g8 19 ♖fe1; 16...♕b7? 17 ♕a4+ ♔e7 18 ♘f5+ ♔xe6 19 ♗xd5+ ♕xd5 20 ♖ad1! or 17...♔d8 18 ♖ad1 ♗xf3 19 ♘xf3+ etc.) 17 ♖e1 (17 bxc3!?) 17...♘c6 (17...cxb2 18 exf7+ ♔d7 19 ♖b1 with an attack) 18 exf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♗h5+ ♔g8 20 ♕g4+ ♗g7 21 ♘f5 ♕a7 22 ♗f7+ ♕xf7 23 ♘h6+ ♔f8 24 ♘xf7 cxb2 (24...♗xf7?! 25 bxc3) 25 ♖ab1 (25 ♘xh8 bxa1♕ 26 ♖xa1 ♗xh8 27 ♕h5 ♖d8 28 ♕xh7 ♗g7 29 h4 c3 is not so clear) 25...♗xf7 26 ♕f3 ♖c8 27 ♖xb2 and White's chances are better.

16 ♕a4+!

An important check, disrupting the coordination of the black pieces. After 16 g3 fxe6 17 ♗h5+ ♖g6 18 ♘xe6 ♕c8! 19 ♕b1! ♔f7 20 ♗xg6+ hxg6 21 ♘xf8 ♕xf8 22 bxc3 ♕c8 his hopes could have been dashed.

16...♔d8 (after 16...♘d7?, 16...♘c6? or 16...♗c6? White wins by 17 exf7+, while if 16...♔e7? – 17 ♘f5+ ♔xe6 18 g4 ♗d5 19 ♖fe1) **17 g3**

Of course, not 17 ♖fd1? ♖xg2+ 18 ♔f1 ♖xf2+! etc. But now the critical position is reached.



17...♗d5

Black has several alternatives here. First, we can easily dismiss 17...♘c6? 18 exf7 ♕xf7 19 ♗xc4 (19 ♘xc6+!? ♔c7 20 ♗xc4) 19...♘xd4 20 ♖ad1! ♕d7 21 ♖xd4! ♕xd4 22 ♖d1 ♖g4 23 ♗e2! and wins, while after 17...♗c5!? 18 ♖ad1 ♔c8 19 exf7 ♕xf7 20 ♗xc4 ♗d5 21 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 22 bxc3 White has a strong attack.

Alternatively, 17...cxb2 18 ♖ad1!? (or 18 exf7 ♕xf7 19 ♖ad1 b1♕ 20 ♖xb1 ♗d5 21 ♖fd1 ♘d7 22 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 23 ♘c6+ ♔c7 24 ♘e7 ♕xe7 25 ♖xd7+ ♕xd7 26 ♖b7+ ♔xb7 27 ♕xd7+ ♔b8 28 ♕d8+ with a draw) 18...♗d5 (18...b1♕? 19 ♘c6+!) is a separate theme:

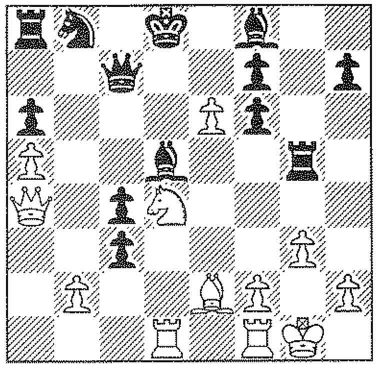
1) 19 ♘b5? (19 exf7 ♕xf7!) 19...♕c6 20 ♖xd5+ (20 ♗xc4 fxe6; 20 exf7 ♖g5) 20...♕xd5 21 ♖d1 b1♕ and Black wins;

2) 19 e7+ ♗xe7 20 ♘f5 ♕d7 21 ♕c2 ♖g5 22 ♘e3 (22 ♖xd5?! ♕xd5 23 ♖d1 ♕xd1+ 24 ♕xd1+ ♘d7) 22...♘c6 (or 22...♗c5 23 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 24 ♗f3) 23 ♗xc4 ♘b4 24 ♕xb2 ♔e8 25 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 26 ♕b3 ♖d8 27 ♖d3 ♖f5 28 ♖fd1 ♕a7 29 ♗xd5 ♕xf2+ 30 ♔h1 ♔f8 with an unclear game;

3) 19 ♗h5?! ♖g5! and White's attack peters out: 20 exf7 ♘d7 21 ♗f3 (21 ♖fe1 ♔c8) 21...♔c8 22 ♘e6 ♗xe6 23 ♗xa8 ♖b5 and wins, or 20 ♗xf7 ♔c8 21 ♕e8+ (21 f4 ♗c5 22 fxg5 b1♕) 21...♕d8 22 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 23 h4 (there is nothing else: 23 e7+ ♔xe7; 23 ♘f3 b1♕; 23 f4 ♗c5!) 23...♖e5 24 f4 ♖e3! 25 e7+ (25 ♘f5 ♖d3) 25...♗xe7 26 ♗xd5 ♖a7 27 ♗xc4 ♖d7 etc.;

4) 19 ♗f3! (Tal's idea) 19...♖g5 (a little-studied reply; after 19...♗xf3? 20 ♘b5+ ♗xd1 21 ♖xd1+ ♔c8 22 ♘xc7 White wins) 20 ♖fe1 (it is incorrect to play 20 exf7? ♕xf7 21 ♘c6+ ♔c7 22 ♘xb8 ♔xb8 23 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 24 ♕c6 ♕d7, winning) 20...b1♕! (according to the computer, Black loses after both 20...♔c8 21 ♕e8+ ♕d8 22 exf7, and 20...♖e5 21 ♗xd5 ♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♕e5 23 ♕d1 b1♕ 24 ♕xb1 ♕xd5 25 ♕b6+) 21 ♖xb1 ♗xf3 22 ♘xf3! (22 exf7 ♕xf7 23 ♘e6+ ♔c8 24 ♘xg5 fxg5 25 ♕e8+ ♕xe8 26 ♖xe8+ ♔c7 27 ♖xf8 ♗d5 is inferior) 22...♖d5 23 ♖bd1!? (a surprise; 23 exf7 ♕xf7 24 ♕xc4 ♕d7! is unclear, but not 24...♘d7? 25 ♖bd1) 23...♖xd1 24 ♖xd1+ ♔e7 25 ♕c2! with an attack: although Black is still a piece up, his king is very bad.

Finally, 17...♖g5 18 ♖ad1! ♗d5 also favours White:



Analysis diagram

1) 19 ♘f3!? (not 19 exf7? ♕d7! and not 19 bxc3 ♗c5!) 19...fxe6 (19...♖f5 20 g4; 19...♖h5!?) 20 ♘xg5 fxg5 21 ♗xc4 cxb2 (21...c2 22 ♕xc2 ♘d7 23 b3!) 22 ♗xd5 exd5 23 ♖xd5+ ♘d7 24 ♖fd1 ♖a7 (24...♗d6 25 ♕d4) 25 ♕b3 ♕c6 (25...♗g7?! 26 ♖xd7+ ♕xd7 27 ♕g8+) 26 ♕xb2 with the initiative;

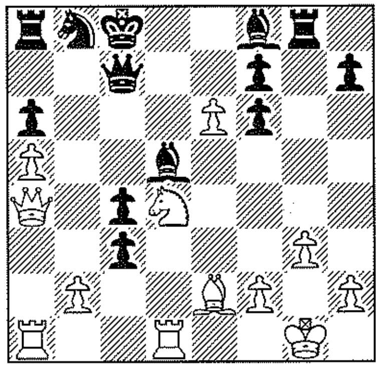
2) 19 f4!? ♗c5 (19...♖g7?! 20 ♗f3 ♗xf3 21 ♖xf3 ♗c5 22 ♔g2 ♗xd4 – 22...♔c8 23 ♖xc3 – 23 ♖xd4+ ♔e7 24 ♕b4+ ♔e8 25 ♖xc4 ♘c6

26 ♕a4! ♖c8 27 ♖fxc3 and wins) 20 fxg5 ♕e5! (it is senseless to play 20...cxb2?! 21 ♗xc4 b1♕ 22 ♗xd5 ♕b5 23 ♕xb5 axb5 24 exf7 ♖a6 25 ♔h1 ♘d7 26 ♖fe1 ♕xa5 27 ♗c6!! etc.) 21 e7+ ♕xe7 22 ♖f2 cxb2 23 ♘c6+ ♘xc6 24 ♕xc6 ♕d6 25 ♕xd6+ ♗xd6 26 ♗g4 ♗c5 27 ♖xd5+ ♔e8 28 ♗f5 ♗xf2+ 29 ♔xf2 fxg5 30 ♖c5 with a slight advantage.

Of course, the lengthy variations given above are rather conditional, and by no means exhaust all the resources of this intricate position.

18 ♖fd1?! (in my view, 18 ♖ad1 is more accurate, removing the rook from a possible attack: 18...cxb2 19 ♗f3!, as after 17...cxb2)

18...♔c8?



A serious mistake. 18...♗d6? was no good because of 19 exf7 ♕xf7 20 ♘f5 cxb2 21 ♘xd6 ♕d7 (21...♕e6 22 ♖ab1 c3 23 ♘e4) 22 ♘xc4 ♖e8 23 ♗f1 bxa1♕ 24 ♕xa1, and nor was 18...♖g5?! in view of 19 ♘f3 cxb2 20 ♖ab1 fxe6 21 ♘xg5 fxg5 22 ♗xc4 or even 19 bxc3 ♗c5 20 ♘f3 fxe6 (20...♖xg3+ 21 ♔f1) 21 ♘xg5 fxg5 22 ♗xc4 ♕f7 23 ♕a2 ♘d7 24 ♖xd5 exd5 25 ♗xd5 ♕xf2+ 26 ♕xf2 ♗xf2+ 27 ♔xf2.

However, it was much better for Black to play 18...cxb2! 19 ♖ab1 c3 20 ♗f3 (20 exf7? ♕xf7 21 ♘c6+ ♔c7 and wins; and 20 e7+ ♗xe7 21 ♘f5 ♕d7 22 ♕c2 ♖g5 23 ♘e3 ♗c5 24 ♕xc3 ♗xe3 is also unfavourable for White) 20...♖g5 (20...♗xf3?! 21 ♘b5+ ♗xd1 22 ♖xd1+ ♕d7! 23 exd7 axb5 24 ♕xb5 ♘a6 25 ♕b6+ ♘c7 26 ♕xf6+ ♗e7 27 ♕xc3 ♖b8 28 ♖b1 with some advantage) 21 h4 ♖xg3+ (sounder than 21...♖e5 22 exf7 ♕d7 23 ♕c2 ♔e7 24 ♕xc3 ♔xf7 25 ♘e2 ♘c6 26 ♗xd5+ ♖xd5 27 ♕b3 ♖d8 28 ♘f4 ♘e7 29 ♘xd5 ♕e6 30 ♕c2 ♖xd5 31 ♕xh7+ ♗g7 32 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 33 ♖xb2 ♕xa5 34 ♕b1) 22 fxg3 ♕xg3+ 23 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 24 ♔g1 ♕g3+ with perpetual check.

19 bxc3?

A mistake in reply. After 19 ♕e8+! ♔b7 (19...♕d8? 20 exf7) 20 bxc3 ♘c6 (20...fxe6? 21 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 22 ♕xe6 ♖g7 23 ♗f3+ ♔a7 24 ♖ab1) 21 ♖ab1+ ♔a7 (21...♘b4 22 exf7; 21...♗b4 22 ♕xf7) 22 exf7 ♖g5! White wins not by 23 ♕e3? ♘xd4 24 ♕xd4+ ♗c5 25 ♕xf6 ♖g6 (after Timman's move 25...h6?! White has 26 ♖b6!) 26 ♕f5 ♗e6 27 ♕e4 ♖f6! (Hübner's idea 27...♗d7? 28 ♗f3 ♗c6 is refuted by the stunning 29 ♕e5!! ♕xe5 30 ♖d7+!) 28 ♗f3 ♖xf3 29 ♕xf3 (29 ♕xe6?! ♖xf2 30 ♔h1 ♖d8!) 29...♖f8 with a sharp struggle, but by my unexpected discovery 23 ♘f3! ♘e7 (23...♗xf7 24 ♖d7!; 23...♖f5? 24 ♕e3+) 24 ♘xg5 fxg5 25 ♗f3! and wins.

However, it is hard to criticise Tal: this win is not obvious at all, and at any rate it was not found by three generations of analysts, until computers became involved...

19...♗c5!

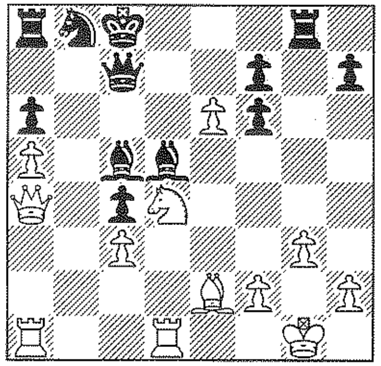
Amazing: after being a step away from disaster, Keller again collects his thoughts and finds the best reply! The only one to compete with it is 19...♗d6!? 20 exf7 ♗xf7 (20...♕xf7?! 21 ♘f5!) 21 ♘f5 ♗f8 22 ♘e3 with sharp play. None of the other continuations can avoid criticism:

1) 19...fxe6? 20 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 (20...♕c6 21 ♕xc6+ ♗xc6 22 ♖d8+) 21 ♕e8+ ♔b7 22 ♕xe6 and wins;

2) 19...♔b7? 20 ♖ab1+ ♔a7 21 exf7 ♕xf7 (21...♖g5 22 ♕e8 ♘c6 23 ♘f3! has already been seen) 22 ♗xc4! ♗xc4 23 ♕c6! and wins (a spectacular joke by Tal!);

3) 19...♘c6?! 20 exf7 ♖g5 (20...♘xd4 21 fxg8♕ ♘xe2+ 22 ♔f1 ♗xg8 23 ♕e8+ ♔b7

24 ♖ab1+ ♔a7 25 ♕e3+ ♗c5 26 ♕xc5+ ♕xc5 27 ♖d7+) 21 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 (21...♘xd4 22 ♖xd4) 22 ♕xc4 and Black's position is unenviable.



20 e7! (both 20 exf7?! ♕xf7 21 ♘f5 ♖g5 and 20 ♗xc4?! fxe6 21 ♗xd5 exd5 22 ♘e6 ♕d6 23 ♘f4 ♕c6 24 ♕c2 ♖a7 are inferior)

20...♘c6!?

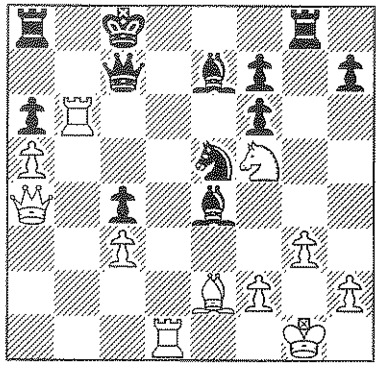
The commentators recommended getting rid of the insidious e7-pawn as soon as possible, but after 20...♕xe7 21 ♗xc4 White has enduring compensation for his material deficit: 21...♕e4 (21...♗b7 22 ♗d3; 21...♖g5!? 22 ♖ab1) 22 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 23 ♘b3 ♕f5 24 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 25 ♖d4 ♕b5 26 ♖c4+ ♔d8 27 ♖d1+ ♘d7 28 ♖xd7+! (28 ♕a2!? is also interesting) 28...♔xd7 29 ♕d1+ ♔e7 30 ♖e4+ ♔f8 31 ♕d6+ ♔g7 32 ♖g4+ ♕g5 33 ♖xg5+ fxg5 34 c4 etc.

However, 20...♗xe7 is stronger:

1) 21 ♘f5 ♗e6 22 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 23 ♗xc4 ♖a7 favours Black;

2) 21 ♗f1 (Tal) 21...♕c5 22 ♘f5 (22 ♗h3+? ♔c7 23 ♘f5 ♗c6 and wins) 22...♗c6 23 ♘xe7+ (23 ♕xc4? ♕xf5) 23...♕xe7 24 ♗h3+ ♔c7 25 ♕xc4 ♖g5 and again Black stands better;

3) And after 21 ♖ab1! he is rescued by 21...♘c6 (21...♖g5 22 ♕c2! or 21...♗c5 22 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 23 ♕xc4 ♖d8 24 ♕d3 with a dangerous initiative) 22 ♘f5 ♗e4 23 ♖b6! ♘e5! (but not 23...♗c5? 24 ♕xc4 ♗xb6 25 axb6 and wins).



Analysis diagram

24 ♗g4!! (into a double attack!) 24...♖xg4 (24...♘xg4? 25 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 26 ♕xc4+ ♕c7 27 ♕xe4 and wins) 25 ♕e8+ ♕d8 26 ♘xe7+ ♔c7 27 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♕a4 ♘f3+ (28...♖d7? 29 f4!) 29 ♔f1 ♘xh2+ 30 ♔g1 ♘f3+ with perpetual check.

21 ♗g4+!

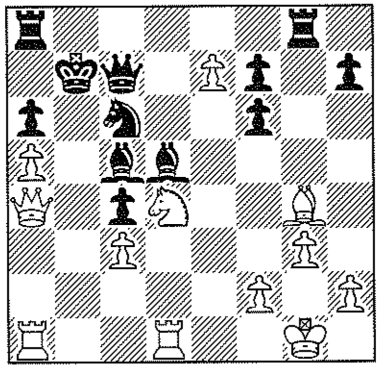
Apparently, the best chance. After 21 ♘f5 (21 ♗xc4?! ♘xe7 is weak), apart from the 'retreating' 21...♗e6 22 ♗f3 ♗xf5 23 ♗xc6 ♖b8 24 e8♕+ ♖xe8 25 ♗xe8 ♖b2 or 21...♗e4 22 ♗g4 ♔b7 23 ♕xc4 ♗xf5 24 ♗xf5 ♘e5 25 ♕f4 ♖ab8 26 ♖ab1+ ♔a7 27 ♖xb8 ♔xb8 28 ♗xh7 ♖e8 29 ♖b1+ ♔a7 30 ♗e4 ♖xe7 31 ♖b7+ ♕xb7 32 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 33 ♕xf6 ♘g4, there is the attractive possibility 21...♕e5!? 22 ♗xc4 ♗xf2+! (but not 22...♕xf5? 23 ♗xd5 ♕xf2+ 24 ♔h1, not 22...♗f3? 23 ♘d4! ♗xd4 24 cxd4 ♕xe7 25 ♖d3 ♗e4 26 ♖e1 and not 22...♗e4? 23 ♗d3! ♗xf2+!? 24 ♔xf2 ♕xf5+ 25 ♔e1! ♕e6 26 ♕xe4 ♘xe7 27 ♖a4 etc.) 23 ♔f1 ♕xf5! 24 ♖xd5 ♕h3+ 25 ♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 26 ♔f1 ♔c7! 27 ♖ad1 ♕h3+ 28 ♔e1 ♕xg3+ 29 ♔d2 ♖ab8 with excellent play for Black.

21...♔b7

It may be hard to believe, but the unaesthetic 21...♔b8!? is more accurate – the idea being to parry 22 ♘b3 with 22...♗xe7! (22...♘xe7? 23 ♘xc5 ♖xg4 and ♖ab1+; 22...cxb3? 23 ♖xd5 ♘e5 – 23...♗xe7?! 24 ♖d7 – 24 e8♕+ ♖xe8 25 ♕xe8+ ♔a7 26 ♕a4) 23

♖xd5 ♖xg4 24 ♘c5 ♖g5! 25 ♖b1+ (25 ♕xc4?! ♖xd5 26 ♖b1+ ♔c8 27 ♕xd5 ♗xc5 28 ♕xc5 ♖b8 is inferior) 25...♔c8 26 ♖xg5 (not 26 ♘d7? ♖xd5 27 ♘b6+ because of 27...♕xb6! 28 ♖xb6 ♘xa5! 29 ♕e8+ ♔c7 30 ♕xa8 ♖d1+ 31 ♔g2 ♔xb6 or 28 axb6 ♔b7 29 ♕xc4 ♖ad8) 26...fxg5 27 ♖b7 ♕xb7 28 ♘xb7 ♔xb7 29 ♕xc4 f6 30 ♕d3, and with queen and pawn against rook, bishop and knight White can hope for a draw at best.

Then White would only have had 22 ♘f5 (22 ♘xc6+? ♗xc6 23 ♖ab1+ ♔a7 24 ♕xc4 ♖g5!) 22...♗e6! 23 ♗f3 ♗xf5 24 ♖ab1+, as in the lines analysed below with the king on b7.



22 ♘b5?

This musketeer-like lunge places White on the verge of defeat (as, however, does 22 ♖ab1+ ♔a7 23 ♘b5+? axb5 24 ♕xb5 ♘xe7 and wins). However, three other knight moves were possible:

1) 22 ♘xc6? ♗xc6 (but not 22...♕xc6? 23 ♖xd5! etc.) 23 ♖ab1+ ♔a7 24 ♕xc4 ♖g5! (Tal's idea; 24...♕xa5? 25 ♗f3!; 24...♕xe7? 25 ♗e2! ♗b7 26 ♖xb7+!; 24...♗b5? 25 ♖xb5 axb5 26 ♕xb5 ♖ab8 27 ♕a4 ♗d6 28 ♖d5! and wins; 24...♗e8? 25 ♗e2 etc.) 25 ♗e2 (25 ♕xf7? ♖e8! 26 ♗f3 ♖xg3+) 25...♗b5 26 ♕xf7 ♖xg3+ with a decisive counterattack;

2) 22 ♘f5!? ♗e6! (not 22...♕e5? 23 ♖xd5! ♕xd5 24 ♖d1, for example: 24...♕e6 25 ♘d4!, 24...♗xf2+ 25 ♔xf2 ♕c5+ 26 ♘e3!, or 24...♕e4 25 ♖d7+ ♔b8 26 ♕d1! ♘e5 27 ♘d6! ♕c6 28 ♕b1+ ♗b6 29 ♖d8+ ♔a7 30 axb6+ ♕xb6 31 ♖xa8+ ♖xa8 32 ♘c8+ ♖xc8 33 ♕xb6+ ♔xb6 34 ♗xc8 and wins) 23 ♗f3! ♗xf5 24 ♖ab1+ ♗xb1 25 ♖xb1+ ♔a7 26 ♕xc6 ♕xc6 27 ♗xc6 ♖ab8 28 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 29 e8♕ ♖xe8 30 ♗xe8 ♗d6 31 ♗xf7 ♗e5 with equality;

3) 22 ♘b3!? This creates the most problems for Black:

a) 22...♗xe7 23 ♖xd5 ♖xg4 24 ♘c5+ ♔c8 (but not 24...♗xc5? 25 ♖b1+ ♔a7 26 ♖xc5 ♖c8 27 ♖b6) 25 ♖e1!? ♖g8 26 ♖d7 ♕xd7 27 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 28 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 29 ♕xc6 with advantage to White;

b) 22...cxb3 23 ♖xd5 ♘e5 24 ♖b1 (but not 24 ♗d7? ♗xe7 25 ♖b1 ♖ab8! 26 ♖xb3+ ♔a8 27 ♕e4 ♖xb3 28 ♖xe5+ ♕b7 29 ♕xb7+ ♖xb7 30 ♖xe7 ♔a7) 24...♖xg4 (after 24...♔a7? I found 25 ♗d7! ♘f3+ 26 ♔g2 ♗xe7 27 ♖xb3! ♘e1+ 28 ♔f1 ♘f3 29 ♕e4 with a powerful attack) 25 ♖xb3+ ♔a7 26 e8♕ ♖xa4 27 ♕xa4 ♖d8 with a sharp struggle.

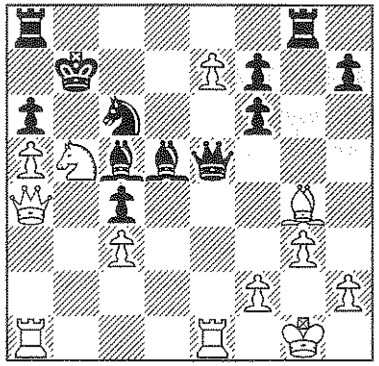
22...♕e5!

Keller again finds the best move! He would have lost after both 22...axb5? 23 ♕xb5+ ♔a7 (or 23...♗b6 24 axb6 ♕xe7 25 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 26 ♕xd5 ♖d8 27 ♗d7) 24 ♕xc5+ ♔a6 25 ♖xd5 ♖xg4 26 ♕b5+ ♔a7 27 ♖d7, and 22...♕xe7? 23 ♖xd5 ♖xg4 24 ♖b1 axb5 (24...♔c8 25 ♘d6+) 25 ♕xb5+ ♔a7 26 ♖d7+.

And 22...♕xa5 would have promised no more than a draw: 23 ♕xa5 (23 ♖xd5 ♕xa4 24 ♖xa4 ♗xe7 25 ♖d7+ ♔b6 26 ♘d4 with counterplay) 23...♘xa5 24 ♖xd5 ♘b3 25 ♖xc5! (25 ♗f3 ♔b6) 25...♘xc5 26 ♗f3+ ♔b6 27 ♗xa8 (27 ♘d6 ♖ae8) 27...axb5 28 ♗d5 ♘e6! (but not 28...♖e8? 29 ♖b1! ♔a6 30 ♗c6 or 29...♖xe7 30 ♗xc4 and wins) 29 ♖d1 ♖e8 30 ♗xe6 fxe6 31 ♖d6+ ♔c5 32 ♖xe6 ♔d5 33 ♖xf6 ♖xe7 (and if 34 ♔f1 – 34...b4! 35 cxb4 c3), or 29 ♖a8 ♖xa8 30 ♗xa8 ♘g7 31 ♗d5 ♔c7 32 ♗xf7 ♔d7 33 ♗d5 ♘e8.

23 ♖e1

23 ♖xd5? ♕xd5 24 ♖d1 no longer works on account of 24...♗xf2+! 25 ♔xf2 axb5 and wins. Also bad is 23 ♖ab1 ♖xg4 24 ♘d6+ ♔c7 25 e8♕ ♖xe8 26 ♘xe8+ ♔c8 27 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 28 ♘xf6 ♗xf2+ 29 ♔xf2 ♕f5+ 30 ♔g2 ♕xf6 31 ♖b6 ♔c7 or 29 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 30 ♔e2 ♕g2 31 ♘xg4 ♗d4+ 32 ♔d1 ♗xc3 and wins.



23...♗e4?

Missing 23...♕g5!, when Black should win, although it is not at all certain that this computer evaluation would have been realised in a practical situation:

1) 24 ♗d7? ♕f4! 25 ♘d4 ♘xd4;

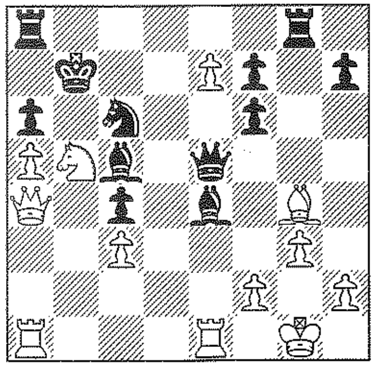
2) 24 ♖ab1 ♕xg4 25 ♘d6+ ♔c7 26 e8♘+ ♖axe8 27 ♘xe8+ ♖xe8 28 ♖xe8 ♕f3 wins for Black;

3) 24 ♖ad1 ♖ae8! 25 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 26 ♖b1 ♖xg4 27 ♘d6+ ♔a7 28 ♘xe8 ♗xe7 and Black is winning;

4) 24 ♖ed1!? Here, in my view, two lines are of interest:

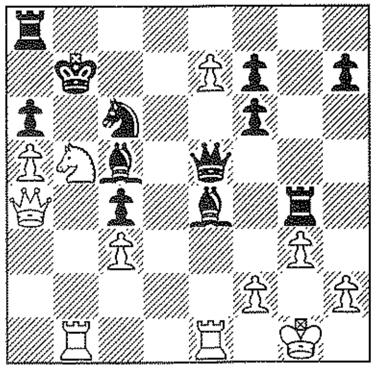
a) 24...h5?! 25 ♗h3 ♕e5 (25...h4 26 ♖ab1 ♗xf2+ 27 ♔f1) 26 ♔f1, and it is too late for 26...♖ae8?! 27 ♖ab1 ♖xe7 in view of 28 ♖e1 ♕g5 29 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 (29...♘xe7? 30 ♘c7+) 30 f4 ♕g6 (or 30...♕h6 31 ♘d4+ ♔c7 32 ♖b6 f5 33 ♗g2 ♗xg2+ 34 ♔xg2 ♖g6 35 ♕xc4) 31 ♗f5 ♕h6 32 ♘d4+ ♔c7 33 ♖b6! ♘e5 34 ♕b5!! (a fantastic move, winning on the spot!), while 26...♕e4 27 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 28 ♖d1 ♕h1+ 29 ♔e2 ♕e4+ (with equality – Timman) 30 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 31 ♔e2 ♕xh2 32 ♖d7+ ♔b8 33 ♘d4 ♘xd4+ 34 cxd4 ♕xh3 35 dxc5 ♕e6+ 36 ♔d1 ♕e4 37 ♖d8+ ♔a7 38 ♕d7+ ♕b7 39 ♖xa8+ ♔xa8 40 e8♕+ ♖xe8 41 ♕xe8+ ♔a7 42 c6 ♕b1+ gives only a draw;

b) 24...♖ae8! 25 ♖ab1 ♖xe7 26 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 27 ♘d4+ ♔c7 28 ♗f3 ♖e4! (previous commentators gave 28...♕d6 29 ♗xc6 ♗xd4 30 ♖b7+ ♔d8 31 cxd4 ♖xb7 32 ♗xb7 ♕xd4 33 ♗xa6 with a probable draw) 29 ♘xc6 ♕d3 and Black wins.



24 ♖ab1! (an excellent chance – the battle flares up with renewed strength!) **24...♖xg4**

Necessary, since after 24...♗xb1? 25 ♖xb1 (threatening ♘d4 or ♘d6) 25...♖xg4 (25...♗b4 26 ♘d4! ♘xd4 27 ♕d7+; 25...♗xf2+ 26 ♔xf2 ♕c5+ 27 ♘d4+ ♔c7 28 ♗f3! etc.) 26 ♘d4+ ♘b4 27 ♕c6+ ♔a7 28 ♕d7+ Black is mated.



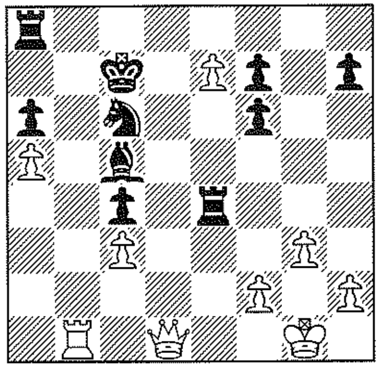
25 ♖xe4 ♕xe4

After 25...♖xe4?! 26 ♘d4+ ♘b4 27 ♕d7+ ♕c7 White retains an advantage both in the endgame – 28 ♕d5+ ♔a7 29 ♕xe4 ♕xe7 30 ♕xe7+ ♗xe7 31 cxb4 ♖c8 32 ♔f1 c3 33 ♘c2, and in the middlegame – 28 ♖xb4+ ♗xb4 29 ♕d5+ ♔b8 30 ♕xe4 (or 30 ♘c6+ ♔c8 31 ♕xe4) 30...♗xe7 31 ♘c6+ ♔b7 32 ♘xe7+

♔a7 33 ♘c6+ ♔b7 34 ♘b4+ ♔a7 35 ♕d4+ ♔b7 36 ♕xf6 etc.

26 ♘d6+ ♔c7 27 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 28 ♕d1!

With a time scramble approaching, Tal finds literally the last attacking resource, and the heroic Keller, who has made so many strong moves, is unable to withstand the extreme tension.



28...♖e5??

Overlooking a knock-out blow. A modern professional would have taken the tiresome e7-pawn without thinking. Moreover, the strongest is the far from obvious 28...♗xe7!, for example: 29 ♕d5 (Tal's move 29 ♕h5 can also be answered by 29...♖e5) 29...♖e5 30 ♕xf7 h5! (30...♖xa5 31 ♕xh7 is not so clear) 31 ♖b6 ♘xa5 32 ♖e6 ♘c6 33 ♖xe5 fxe5 34 ♕xc4 a5 with advantage to Black.

29 ♖b7+! (of course!) **29...♔xb7 30 ♕d7+ ♔b8 31 e8♕+ ♖xe8 32 ♕xe8+ ♔b7 33 ♕d7+ ♔b8 34 ♕xc6 1-0**

An amazing, irrational game, endlessly distant from the strict positional principles of Botvinnik. The complicated problems that Tal posed were well ahead of his time and beyond the capabilities of his opponents.

It is amusing that the victim of this typhoon, the Swiss master Keller, defeated the great Fischer at the end of the tournament (with Black as well!), depriving the 'wunderkind from Brooklyn' of an almost guaranteed share of first place. However, Tal was then at an unattainable height. In the words of an eyewitness, 'he was all full of energy, so scintillating, and this tall thin American, still a boy, literally hung on Misha's every word...'

Bluff as a Weapon of Victory

At that time there was constant talk about Tal's 'devilish luck', and of the 'accidental' nature of a number of his wins. The chess world, brought up on fundamental positional values, found it hard to acknowledge this new, firework-like style of play, based on unrestrained imagination and enormous risk. Meanwhile Tal, having seen that this style combined splendidly with his 'demonic' image and brought incredibly good results, continued playing in the same spirit.

In the autumn of 1959, in the Yugoslav towns of Bled, Zagreb and Belgrade, the four-cycle tournament of eight candidates for the world crown took place: Smyslov, Keres, Petrosian, Tal, Gligoric, Olafsson, Benko and the 16-year-old Fischer. Moreover, Tal was not regarded as one of the favourites: literally a couple of weeks before the start he underwent an operation for appendicitis (later it transpired that the pain he was suffering was caused by a kidney illness).

In the first round the debutant was drawn with Black against the winner of the two previous Candidates tournaments, the now ex-world champion Vasily Smyslov, who was naturally eager to again ascend the throne. And the first meeting at the board of the seventh and eighth champions ended in a convincing win for Smyslov, gained in his typically subtle positional style.

It need hardly be said how important their next encounter at the start of the second cycle was. It was not just that a second defeat could have cooled the ardour of the audacious upstart from Riga – a win for Smyslov would have left him with every hope of another match with Botvinnik. This was a gripping encounter, a fierce clash of styles – one of those games that has justifiably found its way into the golden fund of world chess art.

Game 125
M.Tal-V.Smyslov
Candidates Tournament,
Yugoslavia 1959, 8th round
Caro-Kann Defence B10

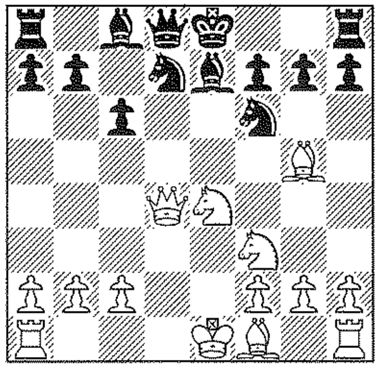
1 e4 c6 2 d3 (Koblents's suggestion – the fruit of some thorough home preparation) **2...d5 3 ♘d2 e5 4 ♘gf3 ♘d7**

Later the more natural 4...♗d6 came to be preferred.

5 d4! (Tal's eagle-eye spotted a lack of harmony in the opponent's ranks) **5...dxe4?!**

5...exd4 6 exd5 cxd5 7 ♘xd4 ♘gf6 was much safer, but Smyslov never liked to create weaknesses in his own position.

6 ♘xe4 exd4 7 ♕xd4 (7 ♗c4 is also good; White's rapid development and domination in the centre guarantee him an enduring initiative) **7...♘gf6 8 ♗g5 ♗e7**



9 0-0-0?!

'A big advantage would have been given by 9 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 10 ♕xd6 ♕e7+ 11 ♕xe7+, when the two bishops in an open position are not easy to neutralise.' (Tal) This would indeed have been simpler and wiser – since also after 10...♘e4 11 ♗xd8 ♘xd6 12 ♗c7 Black is condemned to a difficult struggle for a draw. But Tal, with amazing psychological insight, unusual for one so young, guessed that Smyslov would feel more confident in an inferior endgame than in a double-edged middlegame, and he decided to keep the queens on.

9...0-0 10 ♘d6 (now this leap is not so effective, since Black is not obliged to exchange on d6) **10...♕a5**

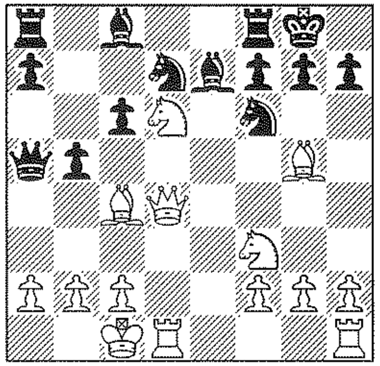
After 10...♘b6!? White might have regretted rejecting the highly promising endgame. Tal gave the variation 11 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 12 ♕h4 ♕c7?! 13 ♗d3 h6 14 ♗xh6, 'apparently with a decisive attack', but after 12...♘fd5! Smyslov would undoubtedly have held this slightly inferior position. However, he was already hoping for more...

11 ♗c4

Seemingly an oversight, but in fact a logical continuation of the tactics of complicating the position at any price. 'If 11 ♔b1, then 11...♗xd6 12 ♕xd6 ♘e4, if there is nothing better. Therefore it became clear to me: my initiative could be maintained and developed only with the help of a piece sacrifice.' (Tal)

11...b5

A rapid and natural reply. Now 12 ♗b3? is not possible on account of 12...c5 and 13...c4. In order not to end up worse, White has to fabricate something extraordinary – but it was precisely this that Tal was aiming for!



12 ♗d2!

'No one in the auditorium expected this move!' (Koblents) The bishop switches with gain of tempo to the long diagonal, where it will be well employed and will have two key functions: to terrorise the opponent's king and defend its own. In addition, the g5-square is vacated for the queen – the main conductor of the impending attack.

12...♕a6!

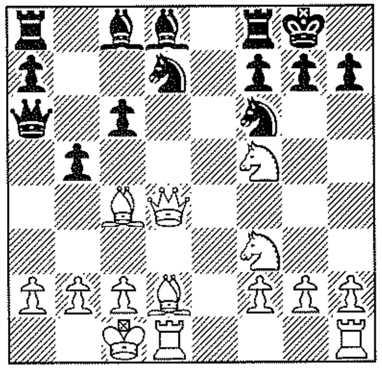
'After 12...♕c7 I would probably have been unable to refrain from an old hobby of mine – trying to demonstrate that a rook is stronger than two minor pieces: 13 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 14 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 15 ♘g5+ ♔g8 16 ♖he1.' (Tal) This would have led to a sharp position, whereas after 12...♕a4 it is probable that Tal would nevertheless have gone into a clearly favourable endgame by 13 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 (or 13...♗c5 14 ♘e7+ and 15 ♗b3) 14 ♗b3 ♕xd4 15 ♘xd4.

13 ♘f5!

After this aggressive leap it becomes clear that White is intending to create an attack on g7, and in the event of ...g7-g6 to exploit the weakening of the dark squares around the enemy king.

13...♗d8!

Supporting the knight at f6 – the key piece of the defence. If the bishop, following the queen, had abandoned its king – 13...♗c5?, then Tal's fantastic idea would have appeared in all its glory: 14 ♕h4 bxc4 15 ♗c3! Believe it or not, Black is defenceless against the numerous threats (♖xd7, ♘xg7, ♕g5, ♘g5), for example: 15...♕xa2 16 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 17 ♘h6+ ♔h8 18 ♕xf6!! with mate.



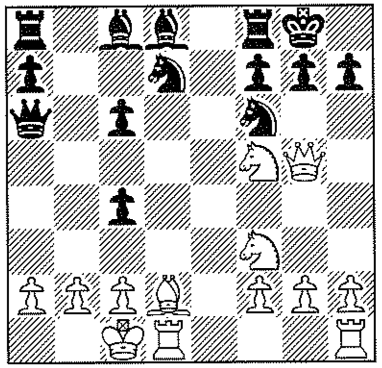
14 ♕h4!

The choice has been made, and there is no way back! Here Tal makes a typical intuitive sacrifice, the consequences of which are practically impossible to calculate at the board.

'White has given up a bishop without any material compensation, simply with the aim of creating an attack. This is one of the most unusual sacrifices that I have ever seen. It is typical of Tal's courageous style. He is not especially interested in who has the advantage and whether his own position is safe. The main thing for him is to find that blow, that spectacular breakthrough, which will bring him victory.' (Fischer)

14...bxc4 15 ♕g5

'This position is known in every chess corner of the world. Can Black defend? Is Tal's idea correct?' (Ragozin)

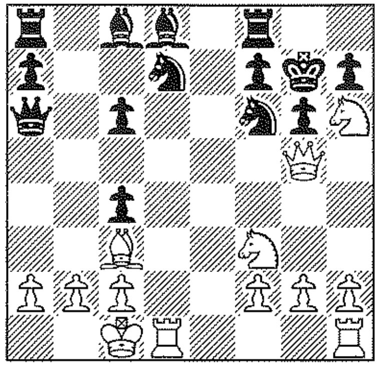


15...♘h5!

A bold decision, essentially an attempt to play for a win. By returning the piece, Smyslov gains time for his counterattack. '15...♘e8? 16 ♕xd8 ♕xa2 will not do on account of the thematic 17 ♗c3! ♘ef6 18 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♘h6+ ♔h8 20 ♕xf6.' (Tal)

It is much more difficult to refute the unsophisticated 15...g6. For example, 16 ♗c3 ♕xa2 17 ♕h6 gxf5 18 ♖xd7 (18 ♘g5? ♗a5!) 18...♗xd7 19 ♕g5+ ♔h8 20 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 21 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 22 ♕g5+ leads only to a draw. 16 ♘h6+!? ♔g7 17 ♗c3 is more aggressive, and now is the time to take a fascinating journey into the magical world of Tal's imagination.

So, Black has a significant material advantage, but his pieces are cramped and, in contrast to White's completely mobilised army, they lack coordination. There is clearly a mass of dangers lying in wait for Black, but his defensive resources should not be underestimated: after all, the initial position was roughly equal and White launched his attack with the bishop sacrifice literally out of nothing...



Analysis diagram

Let us analyse the main variations:

1) 17...♖e8? (in the hope of removing the king from the deadly X-ray of the bishop) 18 ♘g4 c5 (or 18...♖e6 19 ♖he1; 18...♕xa2 – c.f. variation 2b) 19 ♖he1 ♖xe1 (or 19...♖e6 20 ♕h6+ ♔g8 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♘xf6+ and the rook invades the eighth rank: 22...♘xf6 23 ♖d8+ ♖e8 24 ♖dxe8+ ♘xe8 25 ♖xe8 mate) 20 ♖xe1 ♔g8 21 ♕d5!! (the triumph of harmony!) 21...♘xd5 22 ♖e8+ ♘f8 23 ♘h6 mate, or 21...♗b7 22 ♘h6+ (Fritz also indicates 22 ♖e8+ ♘f8 23 ♘h6+ ♔g7 24 ♕xf7+ ♔xh6 25 ♗d2+ ♔h5 26 ♖e5+ ♔g4 27 h3 mate) 22...♔g7 23 ♕xf7+ ♔xh6 24 ♗d2+, mating from the other side: 24...♔h5 25 ♕g7 ♘g4 26 ♕xh7+ ♘h6 27 ♕xh6+ ♔g4 28 ♕h3 mate;

2) 17...♕xa2? Here it is not easy to keep a level head in view of the mass of tempting possibilities. At the board Tal had been intending 18 ♖he1 'with an attack', but later something more lively was found:

a) 18 ♘h4!? (rather tortuous, and not the clearest way to the goal) 18...♖e8! (Black loses after 18...♕a1+? 19 ♔d2 ♕a6 20 ♘4f5+ ♔h8 21 ♔c2! ♖c8+ 22 ♔f1) 19 ♖he1! (but not 19 ♘g4? ♖e2! and the white king is trapped) 19...♖xe1! (the e-file cannot be held: if 19...♖e6? White can win by 20 ♘g4 ♕a1+ 21 ♔d2 ♕a6 22 ♕h6+ ♔g8 23 ♖xe6 fxe6 24 ♘xg6!, but it is simpler to play 20 ♘4f5+ ♔f8 21 ♗b4+ c5 22 ♗xc5+ ♗e7 23 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 24 ♖xe7 etc.) 20 ♖xe1 ♔f8 21 ♕f4!

Now the 'active' 21...♗a5? leads to mate in 15(!) moves: 22 ♕d6+ ♔g7 23 ♘4f5+ gxf5 24 ♘xf5+ ♔g6 25 ♕g3+! ♔xf5 26 ♖e5+ ♘xe5 27 ♕xe5+ ♔g6 28 ♕xf6+ ♔h5 29 ♕xf7+ ♔g5 30 ♕g7+ ♔h5 (30...♔f4 31 ♕e5+ ♔g4 32 f3+ ♔h4 33 ♕f4+ ♔h5 34 g4+ ♗xg4 35 ♕xg4+ ♔h6 36 ♗g7 mate) 31 ♕xh7+ ♔g5 32 h4+ ♔f4 33 ♕h6+ ♔e4 34 ♕xc6+ ♔f5 (34...♔f4 35 ♕f3 mate) 35 ♕f6+ ♔e4 36 ♕e5 mate or 35...♔g4 36 ♕g5 mate.

That leaves 21...♗e7 22 ♘6f5! gxf5 23 ♘xf5 ♘d5 and White is again at the crossroads. He can either force a draw via 24 ♗g7+ ♔e8 (but not 24...♔g8? 25 ♕g3!) 25 ♘d6+ ♔d8 26 ♘xf7+ ♔e8 27 ♘d6+ with perpetual check, or continue sailing in stormy waters: 24 ♕h6+ ♔e8 25 ♕xc6 ♘xc3! 26 ♖xe7+ (things are also unclear after 26 bxc3 ♕a3+ 27 ♔d2 ♖b8 28 ♖xe7+ ♕xe7 29 ♘xe7 ♔xe7 30 ♕e4+) 26...♔d8 27 bxc3 (the greedy 27 ♕xa8? leads to fatal consequences: 27...♕a1+ 28 ♔d2 ♘b6! 29 ♕xa7 ♘e4+ 30 ♔e2 ♕xa7 31 ♖xa7 ♗xf5 or 29 ♕c6 ♕d1+! 30 ♔xc3 ♘d5+ 31 ♔xc4 ♘xe7 32 ♘xe7 ♕xc2+ and White loses his knight) 27...♕a3+ 28 ♔d2 ♖b8 29 ♕xc4 with compensation for the material deficit;

b) 18 ♘g4! This would appear to be decisive: 18...♖e8 19 ♖xd7 (more complicated is 19 ♕h6+ ♔g8 20 ♘g5! ♗c7 21 ♘xh7! ♘h5 22 ♖xd7 ♗f4+ 23 ♕xf4 ♘xf4 24 ♘hf6+, or 20...♕a1+ 21 ♔d2 ♕a6 22 ♖he1! ♖xe1 23 ♔xe1 ♗a5 24 ♖xd7! and Black is lost) with the unavoidable ♕h6+ and ♘xf6; 18...h5 (an attempt to get rid of the irksome knight) 19 ♖xd7! hxg4 20 ♖xd8 ♕a1+ 21 ♔d2 ♖xd8+ 22 ♔e3! ♖e8+ 23 ♔f4 (truly the triumph of mind over matter!) 23...♕xh1 (23...♖e4+ 24 ♔g3) 24 ♗xf6+ ♔g8 25 ♕h4 ♕c1+ 26 ♔g3 or

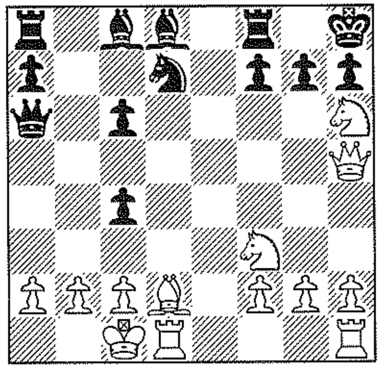
25...♖e4+ (with the desperate hope of 26 ♔g3?? ♕xg2+!) 26 ♔xe4 ♗f5+ 27 ♔f4 ♕c1+ 28 ♔g3 and wins;

3) 17...♕b5! (the only way: by threatening the exchange of queens, Black stifles the opponent's attacking potential) 18 h4 ♖e8 19 ♘g4 ♕f5! (20...h5? 21 ♕h6+ ♔g8 22 ♖xd7 hxg4 23 ♖xd8 etc.) 20 ♘h6! (there is nothing better) 20...♕c5! (after 20...♕xg5+? 21 hxg5 Black cannot escape from the trap: 21...♔f8 22 gxf6 ♗xf6 23 ♖xd7! or 21...♖e2 22 ♘g4 h5 23 gxh6+! ♔g8 24 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 25 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 26 ♗xf6 ♔h7 27 ♘g5+) 21 ♘g4 ♕f5 with a draw.

Of course, White could have immediately forced perpetual check, by the method indicated above – 16 ♗c3 (instead of 16 ♘h6+!?) 16...♕xa2 17 ♕h6 gxf5 18 ♖xd7 etc., but there is little doubt which of these ways would have been chosen by Tal...

In conclusion, Smyslov could have maintained the balance in the maelstrom of complications after 15...g6, but he decided to create problems for White with 15...♘h5!

16 ♘h6+ (but not 16 ♕xh5 ♘f6! and 17...♗xf5) **16...♔h8 17 ♕xh5**

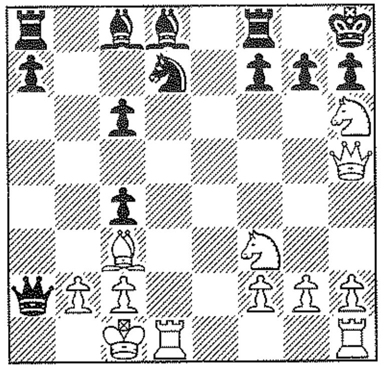


17...♕xa2!

Bronstein, Tal and other commentators considered this obvious move to be the decisive mistake and suggested that 17...♗f6 was better. Not so! Black's position is not yet so bad that he has to agree to the depressing endgame after 18 ♘xf7+! (18 ♘g5!? is unclear) 18...♔g8 19 ♘7g5 h6 20 ♘c4 ♕xa2 21 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 22 ♕a5 ♕xa5 23 ♗xa5. But the line Tal was intending at the board: 18 ♗c3? ♗xc3 19 ♘g5 (with the threat of ♘hxf7+) meets with a geometric refutation: 19...♗xb2+! 20 ♔xb2 ♕b5+ 21 ♔c1 gxh6 22 ♕xh6 ♕f5 and the h7-square is defended.

18 ♗c3

The culmination of the entire game.



18...♘f6??

At a moment when the scales were on the point of tipping in Black's favour, Smyslov makes a fatal error, failing to withstand Tal's 'devilish' pressure! This position has been analysed by more than one generation of players, and it was only more than a quarter of a century later in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1986 No.5) that two acceptable defensive plans for Black were suggested – 18...♗f6!? and 18...♗c7!? Let us check these on the computer:

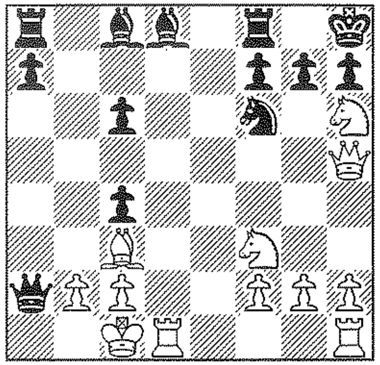
1) 18...♗f6!? In Tal's opinion, after this White wins by both 19 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 20 ♘3g5 ♗xg5+ 21 ♘xg5 h6 (*hara-kiri: correct is 21...♘f6! 22 ♗xf6 ♗f5! 23 ♗xg7! ♕a4! – G.K.*) 22 ♕g6!, and 19 ♘g5 ♗xg5+ 20 ♕xg5 f6 21 ♕h5 gxh6 22 ♖he1 ♖b8 23 ♖e7, although this is bad because of 23...♖xb2! 24 ♗xb2 c3!, but 23 ♖e8 or 23 ♕xh6 wins.

However, in the event of 19 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 20 ♘3g5? a cold shower would have awaited White: 20...♕a1+! 21 ♔d2 ♗xc3+ 22 bxc3 ♘f6! 23 ♖xa1 ♘xh5 24 ♖a5 h6 25 ♘e4 ♖xf7 26 ♖xh5 ♗f5 with an obvious advantage to Black (Fritz). 20 ♘7g5 is better, although after 20...h6! (20...♕a1+?! is no longer so strong: 21 ♔d2 ♗xc3+ 22 bxc3 ♘f6 23 ♖xa1 ♘xh5 24 ♖he1 ♘f4 25 ♘h4! h6 26 ♘e4 g5 27 g3 gxh4 28 gxf4 ♖xf4 29 ♔e3 and all White's fears are behind him) 21 ♕g6! hxg5 22 ♘xg5 ♗xg5+ 23 ♕xg5 ♘f6! (23...♖f7? 24 ♖he1!) 24 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 25 ♖d8+ ♔h7! (but not 25...♖f8? 26 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27 ♕d8+ ♔f7 28 ♖e1) White's attack only brings him perpetual check.

And in the variation 19 ♘g5!? ♗xg5+ 20 ♕xg5 f6 21 ♕h5 gxh6 22 ♖he1, instead of 22...♖b8? the correct move is 22...♘e5! 23 ♖xe5 ♗g4! (not 23...♕a1+?! 24 ♔d2 ♖d8+ 25 ♗d4 ♕xd1+ 26 ♔xd1 ♗g4+ 27 ♕xg4 fxe5 28 ♕e6) 24 ♕xg4 ♕a1+ 25 ♔d2 ♖ad8+ 26 ♗d4 ♕xb2 (26...fxe5?! 27 ♖xa1 ♖xd4+ 28 ♕xd4 exd4 29 f3 favours White) 27 ♔e1 ♖xd4 28 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 29 ♖xd4 fxe5 30 ♖xc4 with complete equality. The immediate 21...♘e5 is also possible, but after 22 ♖he1! (22 ♗xe5? fxe5 23 ♕xe5 c3! 24 ♕xc3 ♕e6 and wins; 22 f4? ♗g4! 23 ♘xg4 ♖ad8 24 b3 cxb3 etc.) all the same 22...gxh6! has to be played, since 22...♗g4?! is unfavourable in view of 23 ♘xg4 ♖ad8 24 ♖d4! c5 25 ♘xe5 cxd4 26 ♘g6+ ♔g8 27 ♘e7+ ♔h8 ('with equality' – *Shakhmaty v SSSR*) 28 ♕a5! (the instantaneous recommendation of the machine!) 28...♕xa5 29 ♗xa5 etc.

2) 18...♗c7!? with the threat of 19...♗f4+ and 20...♕a1 mate. This clever reply was not considered at all by any of the commentators. If White now rejects the perpetual check (19 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 20 ♘h6+ ♔h8 21 ♘f7+) and plays 19 ♕h4?! (19 g3 ♘f6 20 ♕h4 ♗g4! is unclear) 19...f6 20 ♔d2 (threatening 21 ♖a1) 20...♕a4 21 ♖he1 (*Shakhmaty v SSSR*), an unpleasant surprise awaits him: 21...♕b5! (but not 21...♘e5? 22 ♖xe5! ♗xe5 23 ♘xe5 fxe5 24 ♕e7 or 21...♘c5? 22 ♘g5! gxh6 23 ♖e7 etc.) 22 ♖e7?! ♕c5! 23 ♖de1 ♕d6+ 24 ♔c1 ♕f4+ and White's hopes are dashed.

Smyslov's fatal mistake proved to be his first and last...



19 ♕xf7! (a thunderous blow) **19...♕a1+**

Otherwise a smothered mate: 19...♖xf7 20 ♖xd8+ ♘g8 21 ♘xf7 mate or 19...♖e8 20 ♕g8+! and 21 ♘f7 mate! Years later Tal tore Portisch to pieces in almost identical fashion (Biel Interzonal 1976).

20 ♔d2 ♖xf7 (20...♕xd1+ 21 ♖xd1 ♖xf7 22 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 23 ♘xd8 was even more hopeless) **21 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 22 ♖xa1 ♔xf7 23 ♘e5+ ♔e6 24 ♘xc6 ♘e4+ 25 ♔e3 ♗b6+ 26 ♗d4 1-0**

This game was awarded a special prize as the most brilliant in the tournament.

This game was seemingly a paradox: one of the greatest masters of his time was unable to withstand a bluff – a semi-correct, risky attack, arising literally out of nothing! But remember that we are talking about the year 1959, when the leading players had pretty well forgotten the traditions of the old romantic school and were accustomed to thinking in general categories, and few believed that such an 'excessively' concrete approach to the game could succeed at the very highest level. Tal rid us of these superficial impressions. He forced his opponents to constantly calculate variations throughout the game, and at that time many were unaccustomed to doing this...

In the second half of the tournament Tal and Keres were leading by a big margin, and by now Smyslov could only finish third at best. Nevertheless, he began playing very powerfully and in the third cycle he had an absolutely won position against Tal (an extra bishop!). But... in time-trouble he ran into perpetual check – the most vexing draw in the career of the seventh world champion. And then in the final, fourth cycle, Tal did not gain anything from the opening and 'in desperation' again threw himself at Smyslov and sacrificed a piece, this time obviously incorrectly. 'This was openly pirate-like play,' wrote the press. 'Tal was not only on the edge of the abyss, but he almost fell into it.' However, the bluff again justified itself: Smyslov fell into time-trouble, overlooked an unexpected blow and immediately capitulated...

The destiny of first place was finally decided in the penultimate, 27th round. Keres, who was a point behind Tal (despite a 3-1 score in their individual games), defeated Gligoric and caught his rival, who was playing Black with Fischer. Young Bobby was in a very determined mood (having lost to Tal on three occasions previously, he had publicly sworn to gain revenge) and quickly gained an enormous advantage.

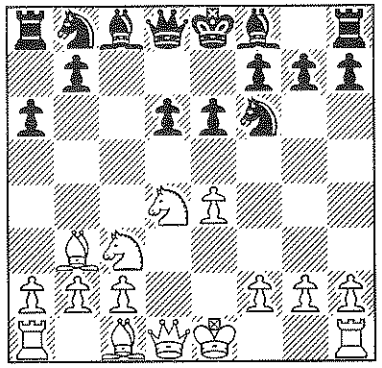
Game 126
R.Fischer-M.Tal
Candidates Tournament,
Yugoslavia 1959, 27th round
Sicilian Defence B87

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗c4

Fischer's favourite move, which brought him many wins. At that time the theory of this sharp variation was still in the 'stone age', and the players began improvising from literally the 8th-9th move (which suited Tal perfectly well). The real development of the variation occurred only in the early 1990s. I myself had played 6 ♗c4 several times, and then Short played it against me in the 1993 world championship match, which marked a colossal leap forward for the variation! Black had to solve numerous problems...

6...e6 7 ♗b3

An interesting alternative is 7 0-0 (avoiding 7 ♗b3 ♘bd7!?) and only after 7...♗e7 then 8 ♗b3 with the possible sequel 8...0-0 9 f4 b5 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘fd7 12 ♕h5 (Anand-Kasparov (Moscow rapidplay 1996) or 12 ♗e3 (Short-Kasparov, Novgorod 1997), although in both cases Black has sufficient counter-chances.



7...b5

Certainly the most critical reply. 'In our first lap game here Tal played the weaker 7...♗e7? 8 f4 0-0 9 ♕f3 ♕c7 and now 10 f5! (instead of 10 0-0? b5 11 f5 b4! 12 ♘a4 e5 13 ♘e2 ♗b7 and Black stands better) 10...e5 11 ♘de2 b5 12 a3 ♗b7 13 g4 with a strong attack.' (Fischer) But it is better to play 10...♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 b5 or, even earlier, 8...♘c6. In fact 7...♗e7 is dangerous not on account of 8 f4, but in view of 8 g4! – a kind of modification of the Keres Attack.

In my match with Short I tried 7...♘bd7 8 f4 ♘c5, and then 7...♘c6 8 ♗e3 ♗e7 9 f4 0-0 10 0-0 (10 ♕f3 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b5!) 10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b5 12 e5! (12 a3 ♗b7 is equal, Fischer-Spassky, Reykjavik 4th matchgame 1972) 12...dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘d7 14 ♘e4 ♗b7 15 ♘d6 ♗xd6 16 exd6 ♕g5 with a struggle for equality, but in the end I switched to 7...b5.

8 f4

Premature aggression. As it later transpired, 8 0-0 is more accurate, for example: 8...♗e7 (if 8...♗b7, then 9 ♖e1 ♘bd7 10 ♗g5 Fischer-Rubinetti, Palma de Mallorca 1970) 9 ♕f3 ♕c7 (or 9...♕b6!? 10 ♗e3 ♕b7 11 ♕g3 b4 12 ♘a4 ♘bd7 13 f3 0-0 Short-Kasparov, London rapidplay 1993) 10 ♕g3 0-0 (10...b4?! 11 ♘ce2 is inferior, Fischer-Olafsson, Buenos Aires 1960) 11 ♗h6 ♘e8 12 ♖ad1 ♗d7 and then 13 f4 (A.Sokolov), 13 a3 (Short), or 13 ♘f3!? (which I had already tried out in Kasparov-Gelfand, Linares 1993) 13...a5! with double-edged play (Short-Kasparov, London 18th matchgame 1993).

8...b4

Fischer attached a '!' to this move, but it should have been '?!' – it was demonstrated long ago that after 8...♗b7! White has not even a hint of an advantage: 9 f5 e5 10 ♘de2 ♘bd7 11 ♗g5 ♗e7 or 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♗c5!

9 ♘a4 ♘xe4!?

9...♗b7 or 9...♗e7 is again more solid, although today experts on this variation prefer altogether not to hurry with ...b5-b4.

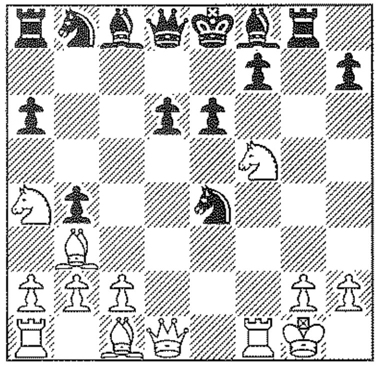
On the morning of the day this game was played, Tal analysed this variation with Averbakh, Koblents and Petrosian, who had called in. 9...♘xe4 appealed to Tigran: 'Such a nice little central pawn... hmmm, hmmm... I think I would take it!' But Mikhail had his doubts, and it was only after sitting down at the board and glancing at Fischer, that he mentally waved his hands: 'Ah, what the devil – I'll take it!' Such preparation is not so much an indication of Tal's flippancy, as of the level of opening theory at that time...

10 0-0 g6

An audacious challenge to the opponent! It was dangerous to play either 10...♘f6?! 11 ♕f3 d5 12 f5 ♗d6 13 ♖e1, or 10...♗b7?! 11 f5 e5 12 ♘e6! fxe6 13 ♕h5+ ♔d7 (or 13...g6 14 fxg6 ♔d7 15 ♗e3) 14 fxe6+ ♔c8(6) 15 ♗e3 with an attack, but 10...♘c5 came into consideration.

11 f5! (this breakthrough suggests itself) **11...gxf5** (11...exf5? 12 ♗d5 ♖a7 13 ♘xf5! gxf5 14 ♕d4 is inferior) **12 ♘xf5! ♖g8?**

A serious error. After 12...d5 (12...♗b7!?; but not 12...exf5? 13 ♕d5 ♖a7 14 ♕d4) 13 ♘h6 ♗xh6 14 ♗xh6 White would have had no more than decent compensation for the pawn.



13 ♗d5! ♖a7

'13...exd5 14 ♕xd5 ♗xf5 15 ♖xf5 ♖a7 16 ♕xe4+ ♖e7 17 ♕xb4 ♖e2 is not possible in view of 18 ♗g5! (*18 ♖f2!? – G.K.*) 18...♖xg5 (*after 18...♖xg2+ 19 ♔xg2 ♖xg5+ 20 ♖xg5 ♕xg5+ 21 ♔f2 ♕f5+ 22 ♔g3 ♕g5+ 23 ♕g4 ♕e3+ 24 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 25 ♔g1 the king escapes from the checks – G.K.*) 19 ♖xg5 ♕xg5 20 ♕xb8+. Almost all the game Fischer played in the style of Tal, but the whole problem for him was that Tal did not defend in the style of Fischer, but found the only saving counter-chances!' (Panov)

'After making a couple of mistakes, I felt myself to be on the very edge of the abyss, especially since Fischer was playing keenly and with great self-control. At the same time, sensing the "smell of my blood", Keres began pressing Gligoric with all his might. It was all pointing to the fact that the question of first place would be decided in the last round or even after it. But Bobby, not wishing to remain a pawn down for long, hurried to restore material equality, thereby losing part of his advantage.' (Tal)

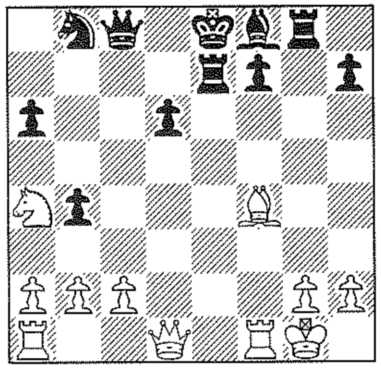
14 ♗xe4?!

According to Fischer, 'correct is 14 ♗e3! ♘c5 (*or 14...exd5 15 ♗xa7 ♗xf5 16 ♖xf5 ♕d7 17 ♕xd5 ♕xa7+ 18 ♔f1 ♖g4 19 ♖e1 ♕e7 20*

♕*a8 – G.K.*) 15 ♕h5! ♖g6 (15...exd5 16 ♗xc5 dxc5 17 ♖ae1+; 15...♘xa4 16 ♗xa7 exd5 17 ♖ae1+) 16 ♖ae1! and White's every piece is bearing down on Black's king.' Also in White's favour is 15...♖c7!? 16 ♕xh7 ♖g4 (16...♖g6 17 ♘xc5 dxc5 18 ♗c4 exf5 19 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 20 ♕xg6) 17 ♕h5 ♖g6 (17...exf5? 18 ♗xc5 dxc5 19 ♖ae1+; 17...♖g8 18 ♘b6 exd5 19 ♗xc5 ♗e6 20 ♖ae1 etc.) 18 ♘h4 ♖g8 19 ♘xc5 dxc5 20 ♗c4, although this is hardly much stronger than the continuation in the game.

14...exf5 15 ♗xf5 (15 ♗d5!?) **15...♖e7! 16 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 17 ♗f4?**

This essentially blunders a piece. Of course, White should have played 17 c3! (but not 17 ♕xd6? because of 17...♖xg2+ 18 ♔xg2 ♖e2+ 19 ♔f3 ♗xd6 20 ♔xe2 ♕xc2+) and if 17...♕c6 or 17...♕b7 – 18 ♖f2, after which the offside knight at a4 gradually comes back into play and Black has simply a 'threadbare' position with a guaranteed inferior endgame.



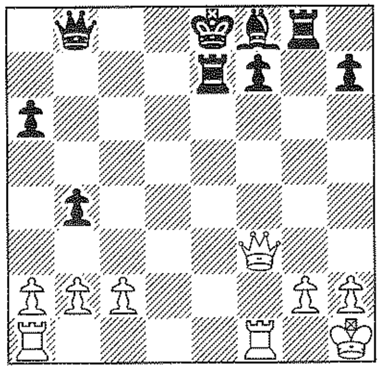
17...♕c6! 18 ♕f3 ♕xa4!

'Such a surprise that I didn't dare believe my eyes! Tal finds an inspired defence!' (Fischer) A staggering revelation: the capture of the piece had not even been considered by White – a vivid illustration of how non-concretely they thought in those times. Naturally, Tal took the knight: concrete, calculating play was his main trump!

It is curious how he himself explained his decision: 'I was faced with a choice: should I go into a slightly inferior endgame (18...♕xf3 19 ♖xf3 ♖e2 20 ♖f2 ♖xf2 21 ♔xf2) or, after accepting the piece sacrifice, subject myself to a very strong attack? I could not see a forced mate, it is true, but, perhaps, only because I wasn't looking for one. If I had been playing White, I would have considered the attack to be decisive. Nevertheless, I chose the second path...'

19 ♗xd6 ♕c6! 20 ♗xb8 ♕b6+ (but not 20...♕xf3? 21 ♖xf3 ♗g7 22 c3 with an extra pawn) **21 ♔h1 ♕xb8**

'The crowd was shouting and whistling with each move. Later I was informed that many sports fans were in the audience. Maybe some soccer match had been cancelled. As a consequence chess was the main attraction that day in Belgrade.' (Fischer) I should point out that the hall accommodated about 2000 spectators...



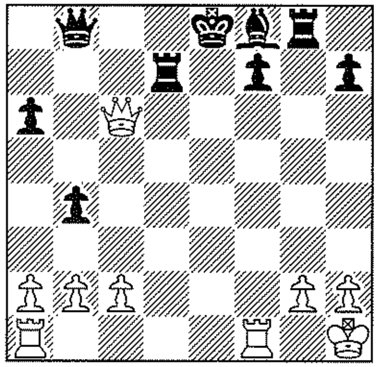
'A famous position: it was here that a widely-known psychological duel took place between us,' related Tal. 'Fischer first wrote down the move 22 ♖ae1!, without doubt the strongest, and wrote it not in his usual English notation, but in European, almost Russian! And not very deftly he pushed the score-sheet towards me. "He's testing me out," I thought: would I frown or display my nervousness. I could force myself to smile, but Bobby was no longer a child, he would understand. What then was I to do? I very much wanted him to change his decision. And so I calmly stood up and began walking alongside the board. I shared a joke with someone, glanced for appearance's sake at the demonstration board and with a contended expression returned to my position. I am sure that all this time Fischer was looking at me, and not calculating variations. He cast one more glance at me (I endured it), crossed out the move on his score-sheet and gave the queen check!'

22 ♕c6+?!

'When after the game I asked Fischer why he didn't play 22 ♖ae1!, he replied: 'Well, you laughed when I wrote it down!' (Tal)

Well, at that time it was customary to turn any annotated game into a poem, whereas now the impassive machine instantaneously parries 22 ♖ae1 with 22...♔d8! (but not 22...♖g6? 23 ♕xf7+ ♔d7 24 ♖d1+! ♖d6 25 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 26 ♖f6+!) 23 ♖d1+ (also after 23 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 24 ♕d5+ White can only dream of a draw) 23...♔c7! 24 ♕f4+ (24 ♖d4 ♕b7!) 24...♔b7 25 ♖d6 ♕e8! (this is stronger than Fischer's variation 25...♕c7 26 ♕xb4+ ♔c8 27 ♖xa6 ♕b7! 28 ♕xb7+ ♔xb7 29 ♖af6 ♖g7 with a draw) 26 ♕xb4+ ♕b5 27 ♕xb5+ axb5, and White faces a struggle for a draw.

22...♖d7



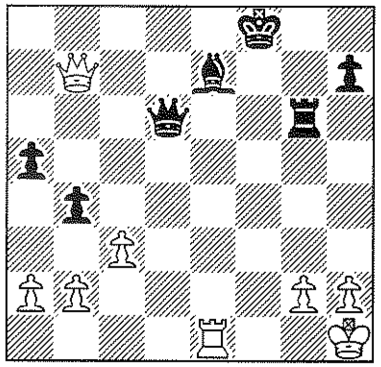
23 ♖ae1+

White also misses the mark with 23 ♖ad1 (23 ♖xf7 ♕d6!) 23...♗d6 24 ♖f6 (24 ♖xf7 ♕c7!) 24...♖g6 25 ♖dxd6? ♕xd6!

23...♗e7 (of course, not 23...♔d8? 24 ♖xf7! ♗e7 25 ♖fxe7 ♖xe7 26 ♖d1+) **24 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 25 ♕e6+ ♔f8! 26 ♕xd7**

26 ♖f1+? is bad due to 26...♔g7 27 ♖f7+ ♔h8 28 ♕xd7 ♖d8 29 ♕g4 ♕e5, when Black wins.

26...♕d6 27 ♕b7 ♖g6 28 c3! a5 (or 28...bxc3 29 ♕c8+ ♗d8 30 ♕xc3 with a draw)



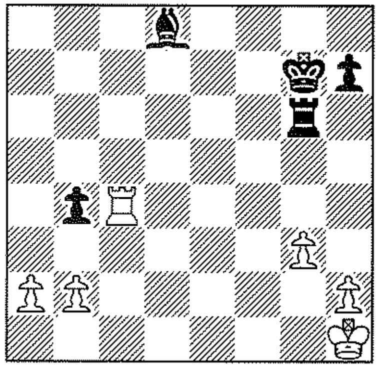
29 ♕c8+?!

'Right is 29 cxb4! ♕xb4 (if 29...axb4 30 a3! bxa3 31 bxa3 ♕xa3 draws) 30 ♕f3+ ♔g7 31 ♕e2 drawing, since Black can't possibly build up a winning kingside attack and his own king is too exposed.' (Fischer)

29...♔g7 30 ♕c4 ♗d8 31 cxb4 axb4 (31...♕xb4 32 ♕e2 with a draw) **32 g3?**

Overlooking Black's 34th move. 32 ♕e4 ♗c7 33 ♕e7+ ♔g8 34 ♕e8+ ♕f8 35 ♕e4 was more tenacious.

32...♕c6+ 33 ♖e4 ♕xc4 34 ♖xc4

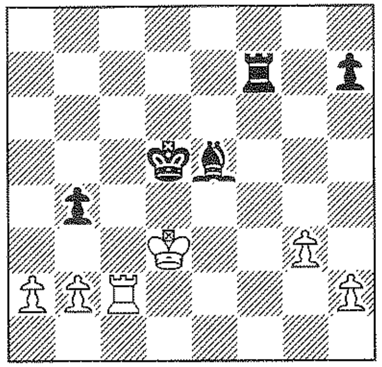


33...♖b6! (but not 34...♗e7? 35 a3! b3 36 ♖c7 and 37 ♖b7) **35 ♔g2 ♔f6 36 ♔f3 ♔e5 37 ♔e3** (37 a3 b3!) **37...♗g5+ 38 ♔e2**

♔d5 39 ♔d3 ♗f6 40 ♖c2?

Drawing chances would have been retained by 40 b3, and if 40...♗e7, then 41 ♖d4+.

40...♗e5 41 ♖e2 ♖f6 42 ♖c2 ♖f3+ 43 ♔e2 ♖f7 44 ♔d3



44...♗d4!

'To watch all this tightrope-walking was too much for me, and I appeared in the hall only after three hours' play,' recalls grandmaster Averbakh, one of the Riga player's seconds. "Tal's position was now absolutely won, but Koblents and Mikenas, Keres's second, were reclining in their seats, clutching their hearts and sucking tranquillisers..." '

45 a3 (or 45 b3 ♖f3+ 46 ♔e2 ♖f2+ 47 ♔d3 ♖xc2 48 ♔xc2 ♔e4 and wins) **45...b3 46 ♖c8**

Neither 46 ♖d2 ♖f3+ 47 ♔e2 ♖f2+ nor 46 ♖e2 ♖f3+ 47 ♔d2 ♗xb2 would have helped.

46...♗xb2 47 ♖d8+ ♔c6 48 ♖b8 ♖f3+ 49 ♔c4 ♖c3+ 50 ♔b4 ♗a1 51 a4 b2! 0-1

In view of 52 ♔xc3 b1♕+!

Thus Mikhail again burst ahead by a point, and a concluding draw with Benko guaranteed him overall success: 1. Tal – 20 out of 28(!); 2. Keres – 18½; 3. Petrosian – 15½; 4. Smyslov – 15; 5-6. Fischer and Gligoric – 12½; 7. Olafsson – 10; 8. Benko – 8. Here are just two of the reactions to this event:

'Tal is in world championship form! He is enterprising, like Botvinnik, he balances on the edge of the abyss, like Lasker, his cunning in the opening and middlegame is close to Dr Euwe, by the unexpected and fantastic nature of his ideas he follows in the footsteps of Alekhine, and by the brilliance of his play he resembles Morphy.' (*Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1959 No.11)

'In his career Tal had many brilliant peaks, but this Candidates tournament was his genuinely finest hour. There his play was truly that of a genius! Yes, he several times got into difficult, perhaps even lost positions, but each time he escaped unscathed. As someone wittily remarked, his opponents always had a win, but for some reason only in analysis after the game!' (Averbakh)

At the closing ceremony of the tournament the effervescent 23-year-old challenger publicly declared that in the first game of his match with Botvinnik he would open with e2-e4!

War of Antipodes

Four and a half months later, on 15 March 1960, that is what in fact happened. In reply Botvinnik chose his favourite French Defence, having prepared a novelty in the ultra-sharp variation with the sacrifice of the g7- and h7-pawns. Psychologically this was a challenge, which Tal duly accepted.

Game 127
M.Tal-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1960, 1st game
French Defence C18

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+

The variation with 5...♗a5 had then been temporarily buried in the ninth game of the 1954 Smyslov-Botvinnik match (*Game No.105*).

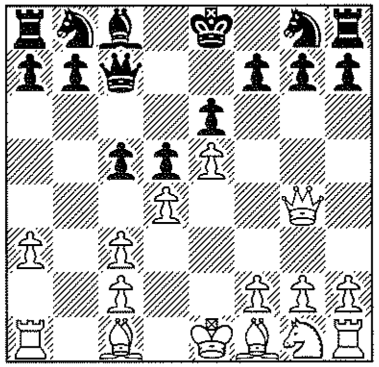
6 bxc3 ♕c7

The currently popular 6...♘e7 7 ♕g4 0-0! is safer. A more rare possibility is 7...♔f8 8 h4 ♕c7 9 ♕d1! cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕c3+ 11 ♗d2 ♕xd4 12 ♘f3 ♕e4+ 13 ♗e2 with the initiative for White (Kasparov-Nikolic, Horgen and Paris rapidplay 1994).

But at that time it was customary to give up the g7-pawn, and Botvinnik had stopped playing 6...♘e7 after his game with Alexander (England-USSR radio match 1946): 7 ♕g4 cxd4 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 ♕a5?! 10 ♖b1 (according to Keres, 10 ♘e2! dxc3 11 ♘g3 is also strong) 10...♕xc3+ (10...♘bc6!?) 11 ♗d2 ♕c7 12 f4 ♘bc6 13 ♘f3 with advantage. 9...♕c7 is better, transposing into the main line – 10 ♘e2 ♘bc6 11 f4 ♗d7 12 ♕d3 dxc3 with wild complications. Here too White's chances are slightly better, although in practice Black has achieved quite good results (however, nowadays they usually avoid this variation).

7 ♕g4!?

'After 7 ♘f3 the play would have been complicated enough, but insufficiently sharp.' (Tal) In my opinion, this is an evaluation not of the position, but rather of Tal's style and mood.



7...f5 (it was not yet too late to revert to 7...♘e7 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 cxd4 etc., but it was not for this that 6...♕c7 was played) **8 ♕g3**

Also interesting is 8 ♕h5!? g6 9 ♕d1 (Bronstein).

8...♘e7

The following looks more solid: 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♘e7 10 ♗d2 (10 ♕xg7?? ♖g8 11 ♕xh7 ♕c3+) 10...0-0 11 ♗d3 b6 12 ♘e2 ♗a6 13 ♘f4 (13 ♗b4!?) 13...♕d7 (Reshevsky-Botvinnik, The Hague/Moscow 1948), when White has 14 h4! ♗xd3 15 ♕xd3! (15 cxd3 ♘bc6 16 ♗e3 ♖ac8 is equal, Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow 14th matchgame 1957) 15...♘bc6 16 ♖h3! ♖ac8 17 ♖g3 with excellent attacking prospects (Kasparov-Short, Novgorod 1997).

9 ♕xg7!

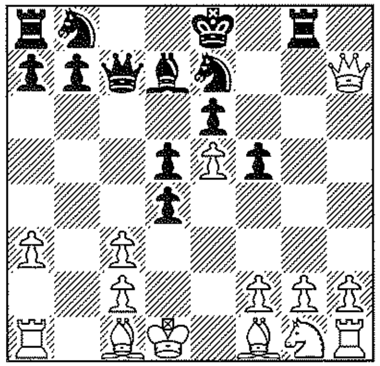
Much more aggressive and critical than 9 ♗d2. When he used to play this variation, Botvinnik thought in the chess language of the 1940s (when sharp lines such as this were still unusual), whereas here he was faced by an opponent who was ready to demonstrate in a tough, open battle that the weakening move 7...f5 should not be combined with the gambit 8...♘e7.

9...♖g8 10 ♕xh7 cxd4 11 ♔d1!?

A fantastic move, recommended in 1948 by Euwe and first tried in the game Gligoric-Petrosian (Yugoslavia Candidates 1959). Less is promised by the standard move 11 ♘e2, for example: 11...♘bc6 12 f4 ♗d7 13 ♕h3 dxc3 14 ♕xc3 0-0-0 15 g3 ♗e8 16 ♗g2 ♗h5 with equality (Byrne-Botvinnik, Monte Carlo 1968).

11...♗d7!

But this is a novelty, and a cunning one. Petrosian played 11...♘bc6 12 ♘f3 ♘xe5, but after 13 ♗g5! he ran into difficulties (13...♘xf3? 14 ♗b5+!; 13...♘5g6 14 ♗f6! and h2-h4-h5).

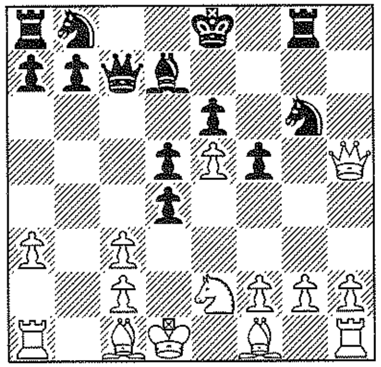


12 ♕h5+ (after the simple-minded 12 ♘f3 or 12 ♘e2, 12...♗a4 is unpleasant) **12...♘g6**

A year later (Moscow 12th matchgame 1961) Botvinnik tried 12...♔d8, and although Tal was in poor form he nevertheless won from this position: 13 ♘f3 ♕xc3 (13...♗a4!?) 14 ♖a2! ♘bc6 15 ♖b2 ♔c7 16 ♖b5! ♖h8 (16...a6!? 17 ♗b2 axb5 18 ♗xc3 dxc3 19 ♗xb5 ♖xa3 20 ♔e2 ♖a2 is not so clear) 17 ♕xh8?! (17 ♕g5!) 17...♖xh8 18 ♗b2 ♕xf3+! 19 gxf3 ♘g6?! (19...♖h4! with equality) 20 h4! ♘gxe5 (20...♖xh4 21 ♖xh4 ♘xh4 22 f4!; 20...♘cxe5!?) 21 h5 ♘f7?! 22 f4! etc.

13 ♘e2!

'Agreeing to a draw by 13 ♕h7 ♘e7 14 ♕h5+ would have been a humiliating creative defeat. It would have signified an admission that I was rattled after my opponent's very first innovation.' (Tal) After 13 ♘e2 White threatens 14 ♘f4 ♔f7 15 ♗d3 or even 15 g4!?



13...d3!?

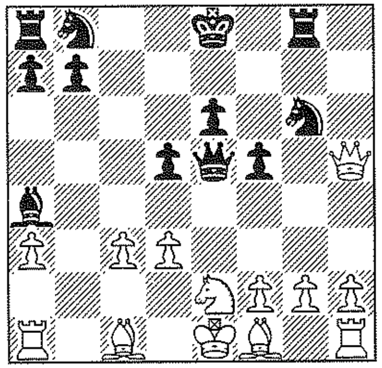
After 37 minutes' thought! 'The straightforward 13...♗a4 runs into the following refutation: 14 ♘f4 ♕xc3 15 ♗d3 ♕xa1 16 ♘xg6 ♘c6 17 ♘f4+!, while 13...♘c6 14 cxd4 ♖c8 15 ♖a2 would also not have solved Black's problems. And 13...♕xe5 14 cxd4 or 13...dxc3 14 ♘f4 ♔f7 15 ♗d3 with a number of unpleasant threats – for example, 15...♘c6 16 ♗xf5! exf5 (or 16...♘cxe5 17 ♗xe6+! ♗xe6 18 ♕h7+ ♖g7 19 ♕xg7+!) 17 e6+! ♗xe6 18 ♕h7+ ♖g7 19 ♕xg7+! – could also not have satisfied Black.' (Tal) In this last variation 15...♕xe5! is stronger, but the terribly complicated position after 16 g4! ♘c6 17 gxf5 exf5 18 ♖b1 b6 19 ♖b5 ♘ce7 20 ♖e1 was judged by Euwe as favourable for White – and the computer confirms this evaluation!

14 cxd3 ♗a4+?!

Tal considered the best chance to be 14...♘c6 'with very real compensation for the two sacrificed pawns.' This is what he himself would almost certainly have played. Even so, two pawns!

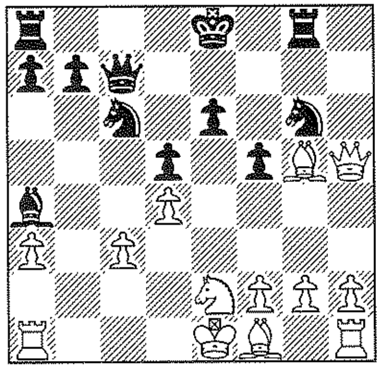
15 ♔e1 ♕xe5

Hurrying to make good his losses. In the event of 15...♘c6 (15...♗b5?! 16 ♗g5! ♗xd3 17 ♔d2) 16 f4 0-0-0 17 ♗d2 Black is simply material down.



16 ♗g5! (keeping the enemy king in the centre and intending to attack along the open e-file) **16...♘c6** (16...f4?! 17 d4!) **17 d4 ♕c7**

Both 17...♕e4?! 18 ♖c1! and 17...♕h8?! 18 ♘f4! are dubious.



18 h4! (bringing the king's rook into play)

18...e5

If 18...♘ce7 there is a choice between 19 ♖h3 and the prosaic 19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 20 ♕g5.

19 ♖h3!

'It is instructive to follow how skilfully Tal finds ways that enable his rooks to arrive in time at the main part of the battlefield.' (Petrosian)

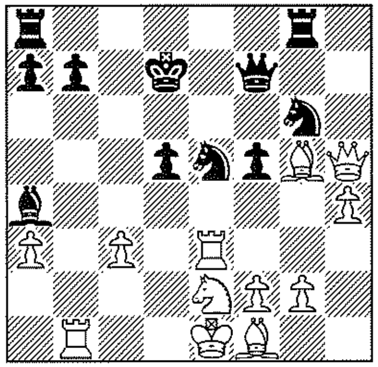
19...♕f7

Botvinnik thought for 14 minutes over this move. 19...f4? was not possible because of 20 ♕g4!, while after 19...e4 White could have set about the conversion of his extra pawn.

20 dxe5 ♘cxe5

It would have been good to drive away the queen by 20...♖h8, but this loses to 21 e6! ♕xe6 (or 21...♖xh5 22 exf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♘g3!) 22 ♖e3 ♖xh5 23 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 24 ♖xg6! ♔xg6 25 ♘f4+.

21 ♖e3 ♔d7 (21...♖h8? again fails: 22 ♖xe5+ ♔d7 23 ♖e7+ ♕xe7 24 ♕xg6) **22 ♖b1**



22...b6?!

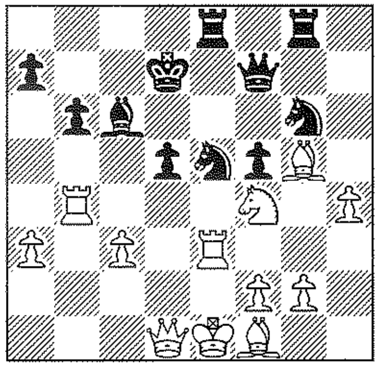
Strangely enough, this weakening of the a6-square is significant. 22...♗c6! was more tenacious, when the challenger was intending to sacrifice the exchange, transposing into a favourable ending after 23 ♘d4 f4 24 ♖xe5! ♘xe5 25 ♕xf7+ ♘xf7 26 ♗xf4 ♖ae8+ 27 ♔d2.

23 ♘f4 (in Tal's words, 'the white pieces uncoil like a compressed spring') **23...♖ae8**

Now if 23...♖h8 White wins by 24 ♘xg6! ♘xg6 25 ♕e2 ♖xh4 26 ♕a6.

24 ♖b4! (also bringing the queen's rook into play with gain of tempo – the machine fully approves of this decision) **24...♗c6 25 ♕d1!**

Back, to its native land! A move which, of course, is not essential, but is still very pleasant. An uncommonly picturesque position is reached.

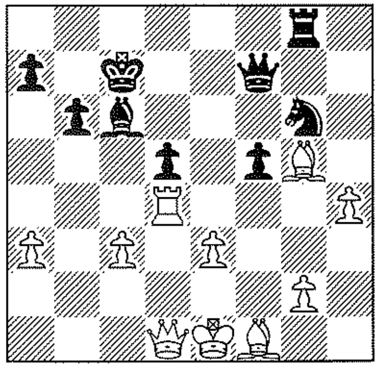


'After lengthy wanderings White's king and queen have returned to their appointed places; the bishop at f1 has not yet made a single move, and yet Black's position is very difficult – White is not only a sound pawn to the good, but also he has extremely active pieces, in particular his rooks, which very effectively control the centre.' (Tal)

25...♘xf4 (it was no better to play 25...♘g4 26 ♖e2 or 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8+ 27 ♗e2) **26 ♖xf4 ♘g6 27 ♖d4 ♖xe3+** (27...f4 28 ♕g4+) **28 fxe3!**

In the event of threats on the e-file, the pawn covers its king.

28...♔c7



29 c4! (the decisive undermining move) **29...dxc4**

It is also bad for Black to play 29...♘e7 30 cxd5 ♗xd5 (if 30...♘xd5, then 31 ♗c4 ♔d6 32 ♗f4+ ♔c5 33 ♕c2) 31 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 32 ♕c1+ (Tal), or 32 ♖xd5 ♕xe3+ 33 ♕e2 (Euwe).

30 ♗xc4 ♕g7 31 ♗xg8 ♕xg8 32 h5 1-0

Black resigned and the hall exploded with a storm of applause.

This was a heavy defeat for the 48-year-old champion. His home preparation did not work. In the very complicated, intricate position with the kings in the centre Tal felt in his element and played with incredible energy and resourcefulness. One only has to mention the 'lateral' routes for his rooks: ♖h1-h3-e3! and ♖a1-b1-b4xf4-d4!

Later, evaluating the results of the match, Botvinnik was to write: 'Tal made wide use of his excellent practical qualities: he forced me to make the sealed moves (like Bronstein) and he skilfully exploited my time-trouble, but the main thing was that, as far as possible at a small positional price, Tal aimed for active and mobile pieces. If he succeeded in this, I was helpless... I was staggered by the fact that, instead of playing "by position" (as I was taught back in my youth), my opponent would make a seemingly illogical move; his logic had a strictly practical point – to set the opponent difficult problems. And when the opponent went wrong, Tal would find elegant and unexpected solutions.'

Here, it seems to me, Mikhail Moiseevich made a serious error. In saying that Tal played not 'by position', he assumed that play 'by position' has a single correct solution. But in fact this is a highly subjective thing and the problems of a position can be solved by various methods. Botvinnik did not realise that his opponent was also playing 'by position', only with a far greater risk. After all, Tal frequently sacrificed when there was no other way out – and he was not afraid of ending up in such 'hopeless' situations. (This error was one of the reasons for Botvinnik's defeat in the first match. But in the return match Tal did indeed freely disregard positional principles, for which he was made to pay).

And so, the challenger took the lead, but the struggle was only just beginning: in the next four games, although they ended in draws, it was the champion who dictated matters. 'The pressure exerted by him in these games was equivalent to thousands of atmospheres. Players know how hard it is to withstand such a thrust by the world champion,' wrote Petrosian. At that moment many still believed that the swift 'Riga rocket' would in the end founder on Botvinnik's iron logic, with his outstanding match preparation and unique experience of encounters with Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine...

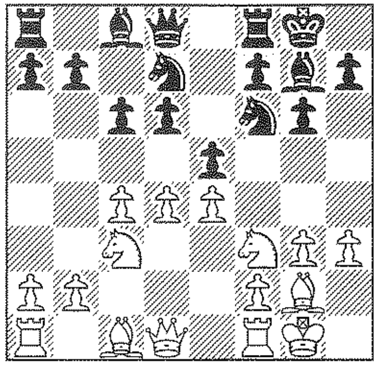
'Tal began to be oppressed by the endless analyses and nervous tension, resulting in disturbed and shallow sleep,' recalls Koblents. 'And how much physical and nervous energy was demanded by the play itself on the stage! Misha could not endure this exhausting immobility: after making a move, he would immediately stand up and begin quickly walking up and down the stage or circle around the board.'

However, in this match Botvinnik did not in fact find the key to Tal's 'illogical logic', which ran counter to his own strictly scientific style. This contrast showed itself especially vividly in the wonderful sixth game, where creative imagination again overcame the seemingly indisputable chess truths.

Game 128
M.Botvinnik-M.Tal
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1960, 6th game
King's Indian Defence E69

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 d4 d6 (5...c6 and ...d7-d5 is safer, but also more tedious) **6 ♘c3 ♘bd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 c6 9 h3**

Botvinnik went cool on the move 9 ♗e3 after his classic game with Smyslov: 9...♘g4 10 ♗g5 ♕b6! 11 h3 exd4! (*Game No.107*).



9...♕b6

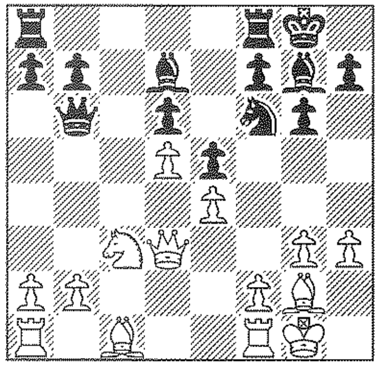
'The difficulties arising after 9...exd4, 9...a5 and 9...♖e8 force Black to seek a more active plan. A familiar combination is threatened – 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘xe4! At the same time he has set his sights on the c4-pawn (with 10...♕b4). And if White wants to retain the tension in the centre, he has to reckon with numerous counter-ideas for Black (in some cases the queen at b6, after ...♘g4, may be able to create threats to the f2-pawn). Our choice of opening proved psychologically successful. Botvinnik again avoids double-edged tactical continuations and prefers the immediate closing of the centre, hoping to gain a tempo by attacking the queen.' (Tal)

10 d5

10 ♖e1 is more popular, with the sequel 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♖e8 (11...♘e8!? – Smyslov), but not 11...♘g4 12 ♘ce2! ♘ge5 13 b3 ♘c5 14 ♗e3 a5 15 ♖b1 with advantage to White (Botvinnik-Pachman, Oberhausen 1961), or else the tactical 10 c5!?

10...cxd5 11 cxd5 ♘c5 12 ♘e1 (in order to exchange the troublesome knight at c5, but all this is too slow and it gives Black a choice of various plans) **12...♗d7 13 ♘d3 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3**

The first critical moment. The two players were already on unexplored territory.



14...♖fc8!?

After 16 minutes' thought Black rejected the straightforward attempts 14...♘e8 15 ♗e3 ♕d8 16 ♖ac1 f5 (after which there is 17 exf5 gxf5 18 f4) and 14...♘h5!? (very logical) 15 ♗e3 ♕d8 – here Tal was afraid of 16 ♕e2 f5 17 exf5, 'and Black has to reconcile himself to a positionally difficult game after 17...♗xf5' (Tal); however, better is 16...♕e8! (unhurriedly defending the knight at h5) and only then ...f7-f5 with an excellent game.

The f8-rook is on its correct square in these variations, but in the game the challenger moved his rook away, having decided 'partly on psychological grounds' to play on the queenside for the moment and only later, after lulling his opponent's vigilance, to advance ...f7-f5. 'I have to admit that at this point I was already seized with the idea of the knight sacrifice at f4, which, however, was still very hazy.' (Tal)

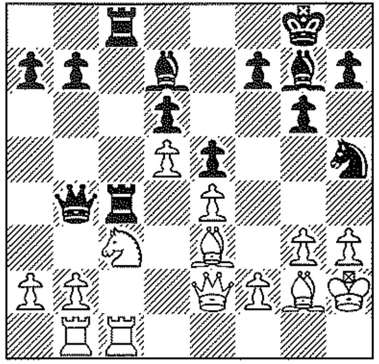
15 ♖b1

With the idea of 16 ♗e3. 15 ♕e2!? was possible with the same aim (and simultaneously preventing ...♘h5 and ...f7-f5), against which 15...♕d8 16 ♗e3 ♕f8!? 17 ♖ac1 ♗h6 was devised many years later.

15...♘h5 16 ♗e3 ♕b4 17 ♕e2 (later on White players tried stifle the black initiative by 17 ♕d1 ♖c4 18 ♔h2 ♖ac8 19 ♗f3 ♘f6 20 a3 ♕a5 21 ♕b3) **17...♖c4!**

After the hasty 17...f5?! 18 exf5 ♗xf5 19 ♖bc1 White would have gained the e4-square.

18 ♖fc1 ♖ac8 19 ♔h2 (or 19 ♗f3 f5!)

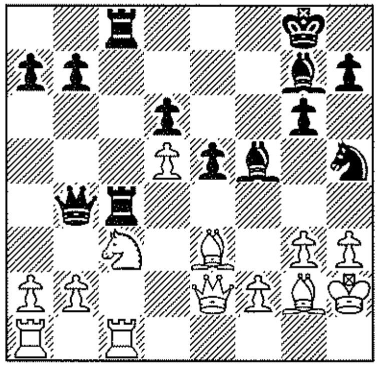


19...f5!

After strengthening his position to the maximum, Black makes an 'anti-positional' prelude to a stunning combinative blow.

20 exf5 ♗xf5 21 ♖a1

After 21 a3!? ♕b3 22 ♘e4 ♖c2 23 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 24 ♕d1 Tal was also considering 24...♘f4?! 'with unfathomable complications', but after 25 gxf4 exf4 26 ♖c1! or 25 ♖c1 ♘xg2 26 ♖xc2 ♕b5 27 ♗g5! the complications quickly come to an end.



This position is typical of the King's Indian with g2-g3; a very comfortable one for Black, who has active pieces. True, there are no weaknesses in White's position and the fork 22 g4 is threatened. Tal thought that all retreats were bad (due to the occupation of the e4-square), but in my view the simple 21...♘f6! would have fitted in well with Black's purely positional conception (pressure on the queenside) and would have retained a good game, for example: 22 a3 ♕b3, and 23 ♗xa7? is not possible on account of 23...b6, trapping the bishop. However, the word 'retreat' did not appear in the chess dictionary of the young Tal...

21...♘f4!?!

A surprise! It is very hard to evaluate such a move: objectively, as shown by a detailed computer analysis, it is losing, but on the other hand this bold sacrifice shocked Botvinnik and to a considerable extent predetermined Tal's victory in the match. From his customary field of clear strategy the world champion suddenly found himself in a minefield of wild complications, where any incautious step would be fatal...

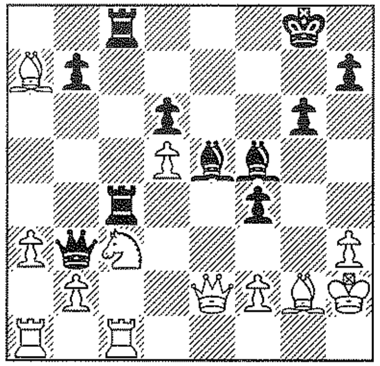
Black's brilliant play provoked a storm not only on the board, but also in the auditorium. Disciplined Soviet chess fans, who had already seen Botvinnik play four matches, were so excited by Tal's inspired play that they began applauding, noisily talking and even shouting. Botvinnik was obviously upset and irritated by these distractions. Noticing this, his second, Goldberg, asked the chief arbiter Stahlberg to transfer play to an isolated room. And six moves later, after numerous fruitless attempts to calm the public, the controllers transferred play to a separate room – a rare instance in the history of matches for the world championship (the same happened in the 23rd game of the 1958 return match, when Smyslov was sealing his 41st move, while the third game of the 1972 Spassky-Fischer match was 'closed' from beginning to end).

22 gxf4 exf4

For his 'unwanted' knight Black has gained a very lively position with a variety of threats. The bishop at g7 dominates the long diagonal, and if it should appear on e5, the white king will feel very uncomfortable. And Botvinnik, under pressure from the ticking of the clock and the severe, 'hypnotic' stare of his opponent, was unable to adapt to such a sharp change in the character of the play.

23 ♗d2?

White could have won by 23 a3! (after 23 ♗xa7? ♕a5 Black regains the piece, retaining all the pluses of his position), although this was not an easy choice: 23...♕b3 24 ♗xa7 ♗e5 (24...♖a8?! 25 ♘b5! ♖xc1 26 ♖xc1 ♗e5! 27 ♘d4! ♕d3! – 27...f3+ 28 ♕xe5! – 28 ♕xd3 ♗xd3 29 ♘f3! ♖xa7 30 ♘xe5 dxe5 31 d6! etc.).



Analysis diagram

White faces a new dilemma: how to defend against the murderous ...f4-f3+ here? Also in danger is the errant bishop at a7 (...b7-b6 and ...♖4c7 is threatened). However, after a careful study of the position in a calm situation, we discover that Black's compensation is nevertheless insufficient. Let us analyse the two natural continuations – 25 ♗f3 and 25 f3 (if 25 ♔g1, then 25...b6 26 ♕d1?! ♕xb2 27 ♖a2 ♖xc3!).

1) 25 ♗f3? After this Tal was also intending to sacrifice his queen with 25...b6 26 ♕d1 ♕xb2 27 ♖a2 ♖xc3! 28 ♖xb2 ♖xc1 'with real compensation'. This was how, on the pages of *Shakhmatnaya Moskva*, Konstantinopolsky disputed Goldberg's analysis from the match bulletin. And indeed, the careless 29 ♕d2? is bad in view of 29...♗e4!!, for example: 30 ♔g2 (avoiding the colourful 30 ♗xe4? f3+ and mate) 30...♗xf3+ 31 ♔xf3 ♖8c3+ 32 ♔e4 (32 ♔g4 ♖g1+ 33 ♔h4 ♗f6 mate) 32...♖c4+ 33 ♔f3 ♖1c3+ 34 ♔e2 (or 34 ♔g4 f3+ 35 ♔g5 ♔g7! with crushing threats) 34...f3+ 35 ♔d1 ♗f4! and the white king is trapped. I would add that the only defence against the mating threats – 30 ♖b3 ♖8c2 31 ♕xc1 ♖xc1 32 ♔g2 ♗xf3+ 33 ♔xf3 b5! 34 ♖xb5 ♖c3+ – leads to an endgame in which it is now Black who has a material advantage.

But 29 ♕e2! is far stronger, and if 29...♖8c3 (recommended by Konstantinopolsky and approved by Tal, whereas Fritz advises 29...♖a8!?), then not 30 ♗xb6? because of 30...♖xf3! 31 ♕xf3 ♗xb2 32 a4 ♗e5 33 a5 ♖e1 (with the premature 33...♗e4? Black draws the fire on himself: 34 ♕xe4 f3+ 35 ♕xe5 dxe5 36 d6 ♖d1 37 a6 ♖xd6 38 a7 etc.) followed by 34...♗e4, weaving a mating net around the white king, but only 30 ♖xb6! ♖1c2 31 ♕b5! – from this square the queen is capable of demonstrating its full power and, with the support of the rook, decide the outcome in White's favour: 31...♖xf2+ 32 ♔g1 ♖fxf3 33 ♕e8+ ♔g7 34 ♕e7+ ♔h6 35 ♕h4+ ♔g7 36 ♖b7+ and mate.

How then should Black play after 25 ♗f3 here? Without losing time on ...b7-b6, he should attack the bishop immediately – 25...♖a8! It turns out that the bishop has nowhere to go: 26 ♗b6 ♕xb6 27 ♕xc4? ♕xf2+ 28 ♗g2 f3+ with a complete collapse, and 26 ♘b5 ♖xc1 27 ♖xc1 ♗d3 etc. also does not help.

2) 25 f3! (shutting in the bishop at g2, but opening a reserve exit for its comrade-in-arms) 25...b6 26 a4!! This is the whole point! Tal only considered the forcing 26 ♕d1 (26 ♕f2?! ♗d4 and ...♗e3) 26...♕xb2 27 ♖a2 ♖xc3 28 ♖xb2 ♖xc1 29 ♕d2 ♗xb2 30 ♕xb2 with a draw after 30...♖1c2 31 ♕d4 ♖e8 and ...♖ee2 (the alternative is 30...♖b1, then ...♖c2 and ...♖bb2, fastening on to the bishop at g2). But after 26 a4!! (the only way to win!) White is threatening to free his bishop by a4-a5, and there appears to be no good defence:

a) 26...♗xc3 27 bxc3 ♖xc3 28 ♖xc3 ♕xc3 29 ♖e1 ♕a5 30 ♕e7 ♖a8 31 ♕b7 and wins (Ragozin);

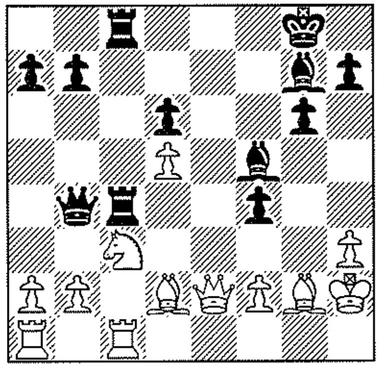
b) 26...♖8c7 27 ♖a3! ♕b4 28 ♘a2 ♕xb2

(what else?) 29 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 30 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 31 ♖b3 with a won ending;

c) 26...♖b4 27 ♕a6! ♕xb2 28 ♖ab1 ♕d2 (or 28...♕f2 29 ♖xb4 ♗xh3 30 ♕f1 ♕g3+ 31 ♔h1) 29 ♖xb4 ♕xc1 30 ♘e4 etc.;

d) 26...♕b4 27 a5 bxa5 28 ♗f2 and the extra piece should finally tell.

The analysis of such variations can make you dizzy even at home, so imagine how what it must have been like to try and calculate all this at the board, and in a match for the world championship... In short, after 10 minutes' thought (the same time as he took after 22 gxf4) Botvinnik considered it best to play 23 ♗d2.



23...♕xb2!?

From the purely analytical point of view – also a mistake, although the correct move 23...♗e5 (which Tal already wrote down on his score-sheet!) would have greatly simplified White's task: after the modest 24 f3! (after 24 ♗f3? ♕xb2 25 ♘d1 there is the stunning blow 25...♕a3!! – 26 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 27 ♗c3 ♖xc3 28 ♘xc3 ♕xc3 with complete domination) 24...♕xb2 25 ♘d1! ♕d4 26 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 27 ♖c1 ♖xc1 28 ♗xc1 ♕xd5 29 ♘f2 he would have gained an enduring advantage – it is not easy to win, of course, but it is clear that only two results are possible. A couple of moves later Botvinnik could have only dreamt of this! So that psychologically the venture with the forcing 23...♕xb2!? was the best choice (however, later Tal admitted that, like his opponent, he had simply not seen its surprising refutation).

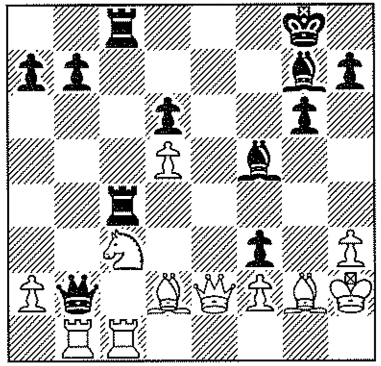
24 ♖ab1

And what now? After 24...♗xb1? 25 ♖xb1 ♕c2 26 ♗e4! ♖xe4 (the cunning 26...♖e8 merely prolongs the agony: 27 ♕xc4 ♕xd2 28 ♘e2 etc.) 27 ♕xe4 ♗xc3 (27...♕xd2 28 ♕e6+ with mate) 28 ♕e8+ ♗f8 29 ♕e6+ ♔h8 (Fritz) 30 ♕f7 White can celebrate victory.

24...f3!!

The crux of Black's idea! The interposition of this pawn thrust enables him to block the e-file with ...♗e5+. The noise in the hall now reached its peak...

'One can imagine Botvinnik's state of mind. It appeared to me that red spots appeared on his face, and he looked distressed. Goldberg, accustomed to seeing his protégé always calm and self-confident at the board, fully understood the personal drama that Botvinnik was experiencing at these moments. That was why he categorically demanded that play should be transferred to an isolated room.' (Koblents)



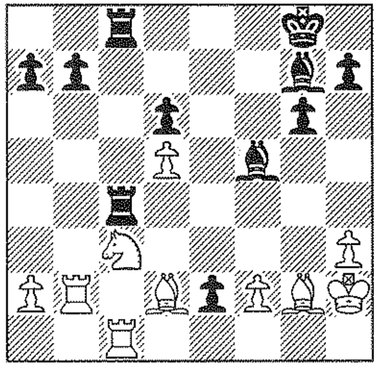
25 ♖xb2??

When meeting a genius of combinations, you involuntarily want to remove the queens from the board as soon as possible. But this was the most inappropriate moment! After the obligatory 25 ♗xf3! ♗xb1 26 ♖xb1 ♕c2 White could at the least have forced a draw by repetition – 27 ♖c1 ♕b2 (27...♕f5? 28 ♗g4 ♕e5+ 29 ♕xe5 ♗xe5+ 30 f4 ♖xf4 31 ♗xf4 ♗xf4+ 32 ♔g2 ♖c5 33 ♖f1, retaining the extra piece) 28 ♖b1 ♕c2 29 ♖c1.

But a few days later Flohr discovered the winning 27 ♗e4!! ♖xe4 28 ♘xe4!! (it is White's turn to sacrifice; 28 ♕xe4?? ♗e5+) 28...♕xb1 (here 28...♗e5+ merely worsens the position: 29 ♔g2 ♕xb1 30 ♘xd6! ♗xd6 31 ♕e6+ ♔g7 32 ♕d7+! ♔g8 33 ♕xc8+ ♗f8 34 ♕e6+ ♔g7 35 d6 ♕d3 36 ♗f4 and Black loses) 29 ♘xd6 ♖f8 30 ♕e6+ ♔h8 31 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 (31...♔g8? leads to the familiar smothered mate: 32 ♘h6+ ♔h8 33 ♕g8+! ♖xg8 34 ♘f7 mate) 32 ♕xf7 ♕f5 (after 32...h6 33 d6 ♕d3 34 ♗f4 ♕f3 35 ♔g1 the d-pawn advances directly to the queening square) 33 ♕xf5 gxf5 34 ♔g3 and the restricted amount of material does not save Black: 34...♗e5+ (34...♔g8 35 ♗e3!) 35 ♔h4 ♗f6+ 36 ♔h5 ♔g7 37 ♗h6+ ♔f7 38 ♗e3 b6 39 ♔h6 ♔g8 40 d6 with complete triumph.

'But, alas, on the threshold of time-trouble (Botvinnik had less that half an hour left for 15 moves) was it conceivable that White should find such truly study-like ideas, in view of his mental confusion?' (Koblents) 'The difference between a chess struggle at the board and unhurried home analysis is that arguments have to be found immediately!' (Tal)

25...fxe2

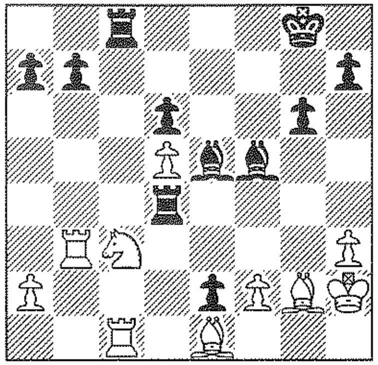


This fearless, nimble little pawn, which has turned into a mighty genie, literally tears White's position asunder.

26 ♖b3 ♖d4!

'The unwieldy black rook has suddenly acquired colossal strength in the centre of the board and in collaboration with the passed e2-pawn it brings Black victory.' (Tal)

27 ♗e1 ♗e5+



28 ♔g1 ♗f4

Winning safely, but the line indicated by Tal – 28...♖xc3! 29 ♖bxc3 ♖d1 30 ♖c4 ♗b2 – was much more rapid and attractive, wouldn't you agree?

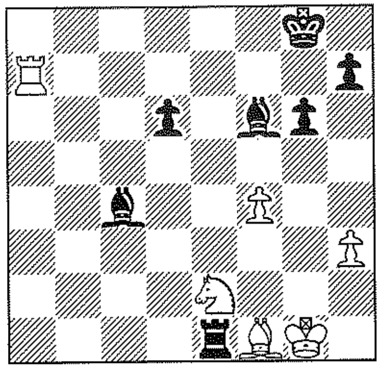
Incidentally, it was before this move that the game was finally moved from the stage into a separate room. 'Chess players know how fatal any irritation can be. Even something small. And such a change of scene could have proved altogether unsettling. On sitting down at the board, for a long time I could not remember which variation I had calculated. I began everything anew. And, of course, I overlooked a pretty stroke, which would have led to an immediate win.' (Tal)

29 ♘xe2 ♖xc1 30 ♘xd4 (or 30 ♘xc1 ♖d1!) **30...♖xe1+ 31 ♗f1 ♗e4**

The rest is simple: the extra pawn with the two active bishops are more than sufficient for success.

32 ♘e2 (32 ♖xb7? ♗d3) **32...♗e5 33 f4 ♗f6 34 ♖xb7 ♗xd5 35 ♖c7** (35 ♖xa7? ♖xe2 36 ♗xe2 ♗d4+ and ...♗xa7) **35...♗xa2 36 ♖xa7 ♗c4!**

But not 36...♖xe2? 37 ♖xa2! ♖xa2 38 ♗c4+ and ♗xa2.



37 ♖a8+ ♔f7

'From the 26th move onwards Black had been replying instantly, and [here] he complicates his task somewhat. Much simpler was 37...♔g7! 38 ♖e8 d5 or 38 ♖a7+ ♔h6, when White loses a piece.' (Tal)

38 ♖a7+ ♔e6 (38...♔f8!) **39 ♖a3 d5 40 ♔f2 ♗h4+ 41 ♔g2 ♔d6 42 ♘g3**

The exchange of his half-dead minor pieces for the opponent's pair of proud bishops would have been an enormous achievement for White, had it not led to a hopeless rook ending.

42...♗xg3 43 ♗xc4 dxc4 44 ♔xg3 ♔d5 45 ♖a7 c3 46 ♖c7 ♔d4 47 ♖d7+ 0-1

The sealed move. White resigned without resuming. The c-pawn will cost him his rook and he is not able to create a passed pawn on the kingside: 47...♔e3 48 ♖e7+ ♔d2 49 ♖d7+ ♔c1 50 ♖xh7 c2 51 ♔f2 ♔b2 52 ♖b7+ ♔a3 53 ♖a7+ ♔b4 54 ♖b7+ ♔a5 etc.

A grandiose canvas! This game showed a typical reliance by Tal on psychology – as it turned out, Botvinnik too found it hard to endure such 'wild' play. It was no accident that later, to the end of his life, he tried to create a chess super-computer: it appeared that only a machine was capable of opposing the incomprehensible magic of the Tal combinations...

The shocked champion blundered in the seventh game and again lost. The score became 5-2 (+3 =4) in the challenger's favour, and many considered the outcome of the match to be already decided. However, in the eighth game Tal paid for his over-rapid play in the opponent's time-trouble: with one move he missed a forced win, with another – a draw... The win encouraged Botvinnik, and he played the Caro-Kann splendidly in the ninth game (*Game No.70*), thus reducing the gap to '-1'. Such a score was almost equal for the champion: in his matches with Smyslov far greater swings had occurred.

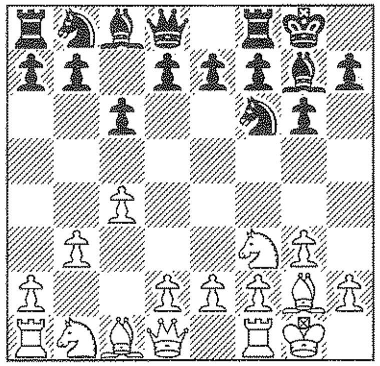
Here it was as if Tal woke up: 'That was the end of involuntary relaxation and a battle with equal chances began; moreover, by that time I had already acquired the necessary confidence in my own powers.' In the 10th game (a King's Indian, Sämisch Variation) Botvinnik narrowly managed to avoid defeat, and in the 11th his ship was wrecked not in a storm, but in almost complete calm.

This game, along with the first and the sixth, is one of the most important in the match. Tal gave up trying to breach the Caro-Kann Defence and, on the advice of Koblents, unexpectedly chose the Réti Opening: 'My objective was certainly not to obtain without fail an opening advantage; a quite different aim was set – to obtain initially a position that was as complicated as possible, in order to transfer decisive events to the end of the playing session. In other words, to create a "full-time" position – and I succeeded in this objective.'

Game 129
M.Tal-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1960, 11th game
Grünfeld Defence D78

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 0-0 0-0 5 c4 c6 6 b3

'Avoiding the symmetrical set-ups after 6 d4 d5 7 cxd5 – here White probably has nothing better: after 7 ♘bd2 Black easily equalises by 7...♘e4, while if 7 ♘c3, apart from 7...♘e4, possible is 7...dxc4 with a solid position.' (Tal). However, in symmetrical set-ups all is not so simple. Karpov later showed that White can successfully fight for an advantage.

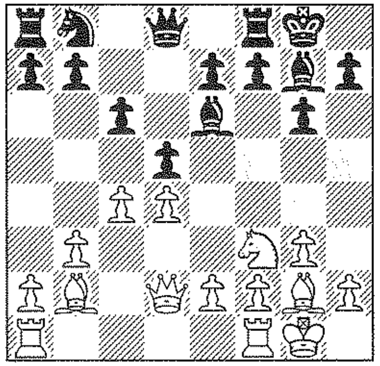


6...♘e4 (after 6...d5 7 ♗b2 the situation in the centre is not clarified, which Botvinnik did not like) **7 d4 d5 8 ♗b2 ♗e6?!**

The correct path here is 8...a5! (for example, Polugayevsky-Kasparov, Reggio Emilia 1991/92).

9 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 10 ♕xd2!

Even in a quiet situation Tal finds a little tactical trick, emphasising the unfortunate position of the bishop at e6. Instead of the expected 10 ♘xd2 c5!, White sacrifices a pawn.



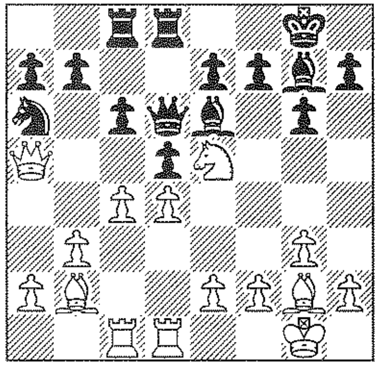
10...♘a6

'Not 10...c5? 11 dxc5!, while if 10...♘d7?! White has the unpleasant 11 ♘g5, and after 10...dxc4 11 ♘g5 cxb3 (if 11...♗h6 then 12 f4!, while 11...♗d5 12 e4 h6 13 exd5 hxg5 14 bxc4 is also unfavourable) 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 axb3 he has very considerable compensation for the pawn.' (Tal) As is evidently also the case after 11...♕d7 12 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 13 bxc4 ♕xc4 14 d5 ♗xb2 15 ♕xb2.

Naturally Botvinnik prefers to mobilise his pieces, but White retains definite pressure.

11 ♖ac1 ♕d6 12 ♘e5 ♖fd8 13 ♖fd1 ♖ac8 14 ♕a5!

This is much stronger than 14 c5 ♕b8 15 b4, after which Black has counterplay with 15...f6 16 ♘d3 ♗f5 and ...e7-e5.



White's pieces, especially his queen, are more active than Black's, and 15 ♗a3 ♕c7 16 ♘xc6! is threatened. Even in this seemingly barren desert Tal is searching for combinative motifs!

14...dxc4

A slight capitulation: after thinking for seven minutes, Botvinnik concedes the centre, afraid of miscalculating in more complicated, tactical variations (I think that he did not even particularly consider them).

'If Black wants to hold the centre, he must be prepared for the most diverse "trickery". Thus if 14...♕c7 (14...♕b4? 15 ♘xc6! bxc6 16 ♕xa6 dxc4 17 ♗a3) White wins a pawn by 15 ♘xc6,' writes Tal, and... he places a full stop. But in the sharp position arising after 15...bxc6 16 ♕xa6 dxc4 17 bxc4 c5! it would appear that Black's counterplay is sufficient for a draw: 18 e3 cxd4 19 ♗xd4 ♗xc4 20 ♕a4 ♕d7! (20...e5 21 ♗f1 ♕d7 22 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 23

♗xc4 ♖cd8 24 ♗b5 ♖d5 25 a4 exd4 26 e4 is inferior) 21 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 22 ♕xc4 e5 23 ♖b1 exd4 24 ♖b7 ♕e6 25 ♕xe6 fxe6 26 ♖xa7 dxe3 27 fxe3 ♗h6 28 ♖a3 ♖d2 etc.

Tal also gives 14...♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♕b4 16 ♗c3! (but not 16 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 17 a3? ♘a2! 18 ♖a1 dxc4! etc.) and... again cuts short the variation, with the words 'of course, it is not easy to decide on the exchange of the dark-squared bishop.' I should like to add an important nuance: in my opinion, after 16...♕xa5 17 ♗xa5 b6 only 18 cxd5 ♗xd5 19 ♗h3! ♖a8 20 ♗d2 leaves White with a slight, but enduring advantage.

15 ♘xc4 (15 bxc4? ♗xe5!) **15...♕c7 16 ♕e1!?**

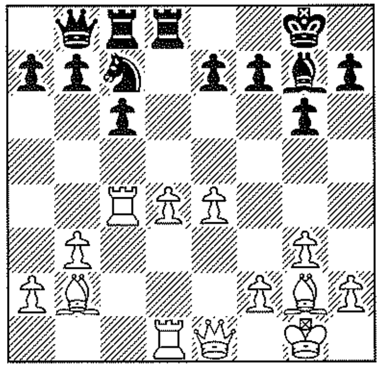
'I wanted to keep the queens on – their difference in strength is too great. Although, after 16 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 17 ♘a5 White would also have retained the advantage.' (Tal) And yet after 17...♘b4 18 a3 ♘d5 19 b4 (19 e4 ♘b6) 19...♘b6 20 ♗a1 Black would have had a fairly solid position.

16...♕b8 17 e4 (with the intention of 18 d5!) **17...♗xc4 18 ♖xc4**

'Significantly weaker was 18 bxc4?! c5! 19 e5 cxd4 20 ♗xd4 e6, when the black pieces have the convenient c5-square.' (Tal)

18...♘c7

Now after 18...c5 19 e5! White develops pressure on the queenside.



19 ♗h3?!

The correct idea in an inaccurate formulation. 19 ♗c1! would have retained an obvious advantage, for example: 19...e6 20 ♗f4 or 19...♘e6 20 d5 cxd5 21 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 22 exd5 ♘d4 23 ♗g5.

However, it was unclear to Tal how he could win after 19...♘b5 20 ♗h3! ♘xd4!? (20...e6 21 ♗f4 ♕a8 22 d5!) 21 ♗xc8! ♘f3+ (if 21...♕xc8, then 22 ♔g2 ♕g4 23 ♖d3) 22 ♔h1 ♕xc8 23 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 24 ♕e2 ♘d4 25 ♕d3 e5. Yes, it is not easy to convert the exchange advantage here, but the move in the game allows Black an unexpected respite.

19...e6 20 ♗c1 ♕a8!

An excellent manoeuvre: now after 21 ♗f4 there is 21...b5!, winning a pawn.

21 ♗g5 ♖e8

'There was no point in playing 21...♖d7 in view of 22 ♕e3 or 22 c5!? (but not 22 d5?! cxd5 23 exd5 ♖xd5! 24 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 25 ♗xe6? ♖e8! and wins) and the Black pieces lack coordination.' (Tal)

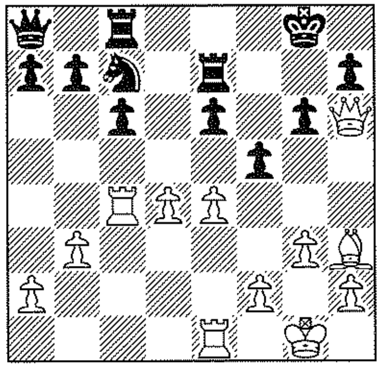
22 ♕d2 (22 e5!?) **22...f5!?**

At the cost of a serious weakening of his position Black wants to establish his knight at d5 and obtain at least some counterplay.

23 ♗h6

A difficult choice. Tal did not like either 23 e5 ♘d5, or 23 f3 ♘b5! and ...♘d6, or 23 exf5 exf5 24 g4?! fxg4 25 ♗xg4 ♘d5! 26 ♗xc8 ♕xc8. But, in my opinion, 23 ♕f4!? ♕b8 24 ♕h4 was better, retaining the initiative.

23...♗xh6 24 ♕xh6 ♖e7 (not 24...fxe4?! 25 ♖e1) **25 ♖e1** (threatening 26 exf5 gxf5 27 ♗xf5)



25...♖f8!

Strangely enough, the exchange of bishops has given Black the opportunity to disentangle himself.

26 ♖c5

'Here I sensed that Botvinnik's brilliant defence had deprived White of any advantage. However, a time scramble was approaching, and I decided to renew the tactical "skirmish", by playing my rook to e5.' (Tal) After 26 exf5 gxf5 27 ♗g2 ♕c8 and ...♕g6 Black also has counterplay against the d4-pawn.

26...♕d8 27 ♖e5 ♖ef7?!

Tal attaches an exclamation mark to this move and writes: 'Black "genuinely" threatens to take on d4, forcing his opponent to reduce the tempo of the attack. It is possible that he could have gained a draw without particular difficulty by 27...♕xd4 28 exf5 gxf5 29 ♗xf5 ♖ef7 30 ♖5e4 ♕f6 31 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 32 ♗xe6+ ♘xe6 33 ♖xe6 ♖xf2, but after 34 ♖e7 the endgame is nevertheless advantageous to White.'

However, after 34...♖xa2 35 ♖xb7 ♖d8 the position is a dead draw! And besides, instead of 30...♕f6, 30...♕c5!? is possible – 31 ♗xe6 (31 ♖e5 ♕d4 with a draw) 31...♘xe6 32 ♖xe6 ♕xf2+ 33 ♔h1 ♕xa2 and it is not clear who is playing for a win.

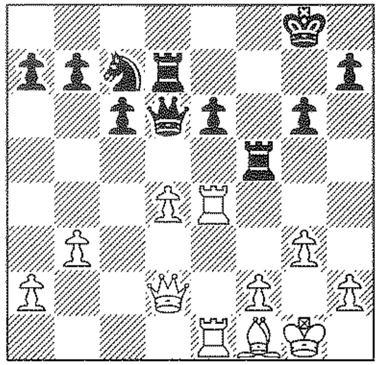
Thus 27...♕xd4! would have given an easy draw. However, Botvinnik again did not want to calculate 'unclear' variations, especially with time-trouble imminent. The mistake of the first match! In the return match he realised that it was not possible to avoid such calculations...

28 ♕d2 ♕d6 29 ♗f1

'Finally removing the bishop from h3, where it is biting on 'granite' at f5, and intending to continue the pressure on the e6-pawn by ♗c4.' (Tal)

29...♖d7 (with the threats of ♕xd4 and ♕xe5) **30 exf5 ♖xf5! 31 ♖5e4**

'Again striving to complicate the play. 31 ♖xf5 was probably stronger – 31...gxf5 32 ♕g5+ ♖g7 33 ♕f6 ♖g6 34 ♕e5 ♕xe5 35 dxe5 or 31...exf5 32 ♗c4+ ♔g7 33 ♕c3 with a positional advantage, since 33...♕xd4? does not work: 34 ♖e7+ ♔f8 35 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 36 ♖xc7.' (Tal) But in my opinion, after 33...♘d5! 34 ♕f3 ♘f6 White's position, with his weakness at d4, is not better.



31...♖f6?

Signs of time-trouble: an amazingly passive move! 'Black could have forced a draw by 31...♖d5! 32 ♗c4 (32 ♖d1 c5) 32...♖xd4 33 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 34 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 35 ♗xe6+.' (Tal) This would have been the triumph of Black's strategy.

32 h4! (instantly sensing the change of situation: White again has a dangerous initiative)

32...♔g7

'A typical time-trouble prophylactic move.' (Tal)

33 h5 gxh5 (eliminating the threats of 34 h6+ and 34 hxg6 hxg6 35 ♖h4 and ♕h6+) **34 ♖h4**

34 ♕g5+?! ♖g6 35 ♕xh5 is weaker because of 35...♘d5! and ...♘f6.

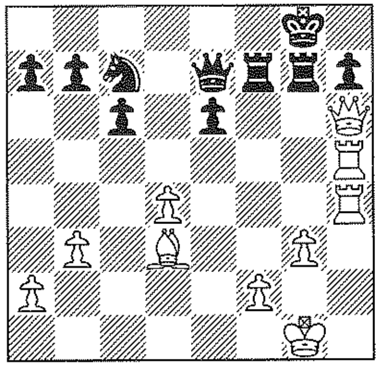
34...♔g8

Time, time... 'It would have been harder to breach the screen along the sixth rank after 34...h6!' (Tal) After this there could have followed 35 ♖ee4 etc.

35 ♗d3 (with the threat of ♕g5+) **35...♖g7 36 ♖e5!**

In order to double rooks on the h-file and assail the h7-pawn.

36...♖ff7 37 ♕h6 ♕e7 38 ♖exh5



In literally 5-6 moves the position has changed strikingly: the entire white army is on the attack!

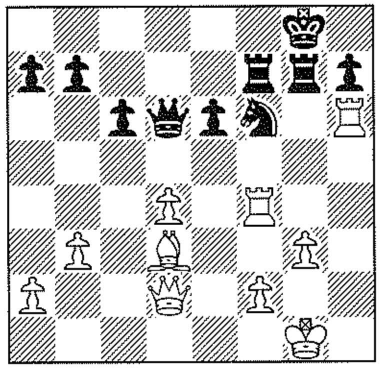
38...♘d5! (to the defence of the h7-pawn) **39 ♕d2!**

'One of Black's pieces is actively placed, and this is sufficient for there not to be a forced win: 39 ♗xh7+? ♖xh7 40 ♖g4+ ♔h8 41 ♕g6 ♘f6! and nothing comes of the attack. Therefore White remembered the principle of tripling heavy pieces: the strongest of them should be at the rear. Make way for the rooks!' (Tal)

39...♘f6 40 ♖h6 ♕d6

The last move before the time control. Goldberg suggested 40...♘d7!? and ...♘f8, defending both pawns, but this is very passive.

41 ♖f4



Ensuring that it was his opponent who had to seal a move. 'I wanted Black to have to decide on a committing continuation without exhaustive adjournment analysis. I don't think there was anything unsporting about this action.' (Tal)

41...♕f8

Botvinnik thought over his sealed move for 42 minutes. It is a dismal situation for Black: he has too many weaknesses. Tal and Koblents also had to analyse 41...♘g4? 42 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 43 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 (43...♔xf7 44 ♖h4) 44 ♖g6 ♖xf2 45 ♖g8+ ♔f7 46 ♕d3 and wins, 41...♕c7 (or 41...♕d8) 42 ♕e2 followed by ♕e5, and 41...♘d7 42 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 43 ♗xh7 c5 44 ♕e2! with a virtually irresistible attack.

One other attempt, 41...e5!? 42 dxe5 ♕xe5, was also studied, and in my view this would have left Black with better saving chances than in the game:

1) 43 ♖hxf6 ♖xf6 44 ♗c4+ ♖gf7! 45 ♕d8+ ♔g7 46 ♗xf7 ♔xf7 (46...♖xf4? 47 ♕g8+) 47 ♕d7+ ♕c7 48 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 49 ♕xe7+ (the machine suggests 49 ♕d4+!? and ♕xa7) 49...♔xe7 'with sufficient defensive resources in the pawn endgame.' (Tal)

2) 43 ♖f5 (this is how Tal had decided to continue!) 43...♕d4 (43...♕a1+ 44 ♔g2), and here White supposedly wins by 44 ♖hxf6 (*? – G.K.*) 44...♖xg3+ (44...♖xf6? 45 ♗c4+ ♕xc4 46 ♕d8+) 45 ♔f1 ♖xd3 (*? – G.K.*) 46 ♕g5+ ♔h8 47 ♖xf7, but after 45....♕a1+! 46 ♔e2 ♖c7+ it is not White who wins, but Black; therefore I would have preferred 44 ♖f3, although after 44...♔h8 White's advantage is by no means decisive;

3) 43 ♗c4! (this move is not mentioned in the commentaries) 43...♘d5 44 ♖d4 ♖d7 45 b4, retaining an obvious advantage.

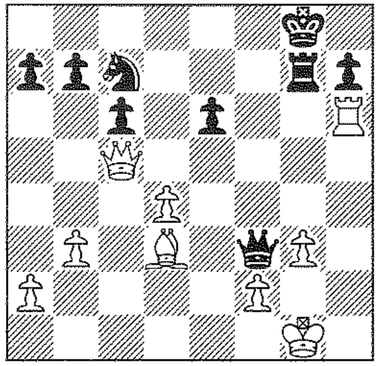
Even so, if Black was not going to play 40...♘d7 and ...♘f8, then he should have gone in for 41...e5. After the game continuation he has a completely bad position: it is very hard to defend two weak pawns. Something similar occurred in the 48th game of my first match with Karpov (Moscow 1984/85).

42 ♕e3 (but not 42 ♕e2? ♖xg3+) **42...♘d5 43 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 44 ♕e5!**

With the threat of ♖xe6. 'The endgame after 44 ♕xe6 ♕xe6 45 ♖xe6 ♖g4 46 ♖e4 (46 ♗c4 ♔f7) 46...♖xe4 47 ♗xe4 ♘c3 would have been too modest a transformation of White's enormous positional advantage.' (Tal)

44...♘c7 45 ♕c5! (also probing the weaknesses on the other sector of the front) **45...♕f3**

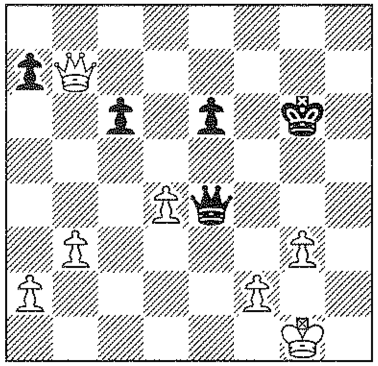
A desperate counterattack. 45...a6? 46 ♕b6 ♘d5 (46...♘e8 47 ♖xe6!) 47 ♕d8+ ♕f8 48 ♗xh7+! is patently bad.



46 ♗xh7+! (forcibly transposing into a won queen ending) **46...♖xh7** (46...♔f7 47 ♕e5!) **47 ♕g5+ ♔h8**

If 47...♖g7, then 48 ♕d8+, and 48...♕f8 fails to 49 ♖h8+.

48 ♕d8+ ♔g7 49 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 50 ♕xc7+ ♔g6 51 ♕xb7 ♕e4 (it is inferior to play 51...♕d1+ 52 ♔g2 ♕xd4 53 ♕xc6 etc.)



52 ♕a6!

An accurate means of converting the advantage. 'The win would have been more difficult after 52 ♕xa7 ♕e1+ 53 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 54 ♔h2 ♕f3 55 d5 cxd5. But now, when the white queen is in play, the king can calmly begin its passage.' (Tal)

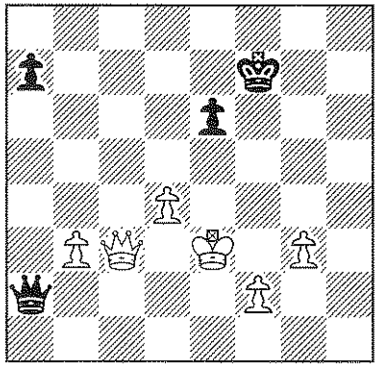
52...♕e1+ 53 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 54 ♔f1 ♕b1+ (or 54...♕h1+ 55 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 56 ♔d2 ♕g5+ 57 ♔c2, and 57...♕f5+? fails to 58 ♕d3) **55 ♔e2 ♕c2+** (55...♕e4+ 56 ♔d2) **56 ♔f3 ♕f5+**

If 56...♕c3+ or 56...♕d1+ there would have followed 57 ♔g2.

57 ♔e3 ♕g5+ 58 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 59 ♔d2 ♔f6 (in any case the checks come to an end) **60 ♕xc6**

'Such pawn exchanges undoubtedly make things easier for White.' (Tal)

60...♕a5+ 61 ♕c3 ♕xa2+ 62 ♔e3 ♔f7



63 d5! (creating two connected passed pawns) **63...exd5** (63...e5 64 ♕c4!) **64 ♕c7+ ♔f6**

64...♔e6 65 ♕c6+ ♔e5 66 f4+ ♔f5 67 ♕d7+ ♔f6 68 ♕xd5 was equally hopeless.

65 ♕c6+ ♔e7 66 ♕xd5 ♕a1 67 ♕e4+ ♔f7 68 ♔f4 ♕c1+ 69 ♔g4 ♕a1 70 ♕d5+ ♔f8 71 ♔f5 ♕b1+ 72 ♔f6 1-0

'Botvinnik, a man of strong will, who was capable of hiding his emotions, left the stage literally broken, and behind his horn-rimmed glasses his eyes were incredibly sad... At this moment he appeared to me to be very unhappy.' (Koblents)

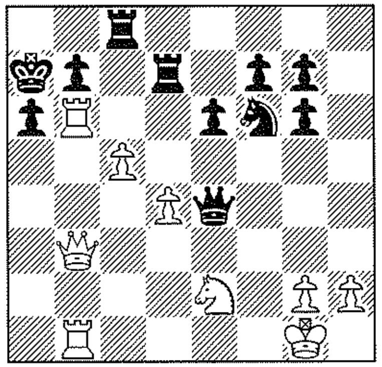
Of course, Botvinnik was depressed by twice missing a straightforward draw, but even more so by the fact that he had suffered a defeat on his home ground, and had been crushed by his own positional weapon. It turned out that Tal was able to defeat him not only by 'mad' play, but also by 'normal' play. The champion's throne began to shake!

After this there followed five draws, bringing the score to 9-7 in the challenger's favour. 'It is very difficult to force yourself to play every game with an identical striving for victory, but even more difficult to approach your goal with tortoise-like steps,' lamented Tal. In the 17th game he broke loose and took an obvious gamble against the Caro-Kann (the famous anti-positional move 12 f4?!). Botvinnik played excellently, achieved a material advantage, but in searching for a 'punishment' he thought for ages and again ended up in time-trouble.

Game 130

M.Tal-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1960, 17th game



39...♕d5??

A tragic blunder with the flag about to fall. The threat of ♖xa6+ could have been parried by 39...♔a8! 'I do not know if White's attack would then have been sufficient for a draw, but the position would still have contained many tactical resources. Possible, for example, was 40 h3 or 40 ♖b4 with sharp play.' (Tal)

On the hand, the machine 'knows' that after 40 h3 Black wins by 40...♘d5! 41 ♖xb7 (41 ♖d6 ♘e3!) 41...♕xb1+ 42 ♕xb1 ♖xb7 (the two rooks and a pawn must be able to overcome the queen), while if 40 ♖b4 – 40...♘g4! 41 ♘g3 ♕e3+ 42 ♕xe3 ♘xe3 etc. In the event of 40 ♕a2 ♖c6! 41 ♖xc6 (41 ♖6b2 e5! or 41 ♖6b4 ♘d5 42 ♖a4 e5 and wins) 41...♕xc6 42 ♖b6 ♕d5 43 ♕a3 ♔a7 44 ♕b4 ♕e4 White again cannot hold out: 45 c6?! bxc6 46 ♕c5 ♕e3+ 47 ♔f1 ♘e4!

40 ♖xa6+! ♔b8 41 ♕a4 1-0

After 10 minutes, having convinced himself that his position was hopeless, Black resigned. This was evidently the decisive moment in the war of antipodes: instead of '-1', Botvinnik's score became '-3'.

After a nervy draw in the 18th game, the shattered champion also lost the 19th, which the challenger conducted with genuine inspiration and later called his best creative achievement in the match: 'In it there was not a countless number of lengthy variations – I constantly had to proceed on general positional considerations, and up till then I had played very few such games.'

Game 131

M.Tal-M.Botvinnik

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1960, 19th game
Dutch Defence A87

1 c4 f5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 g3

'Seeing as Botvinnik's favourite system is the "stonewall", for the moment I decided to refrain from d2-d4, in order to have the possibility of ramming the wall by d2-d3 and e2-e4.' (Tal)

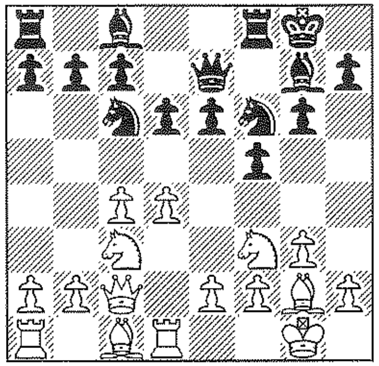
3...g6 (a counter-surprise: the Leningrad Variation!) **4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d4 d6 6 ♘c3 e6!?**

A rare move, diverting the opponent from the usual lines – 6...0-0 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 or 7...c6 8 d5.

7 0-0 0-0 8 ♕c2 (but not 8 ♖e1 ♘e4!) **8...♘c6** (8...♕e7 9 e4!) **9 ♖d1**

Forestalling 9...e5. 'Inferior was 9 d5?! ♘b4 10 ♕b3 ♘a6 11 ♗e3 ♘g4.' (Tal)

9...♕e7 (with the same idea of ...e6-e5)



10 ♖b1!

Threatening b2-b4-b5 and ♗a3. If 10 e4, then 10...fxe4 11 ♘xe4 e5 12 dxe5 ♘xe4 13 ♕xe4 dxe5 with equality (Podgaets-Tal, 36th USSR Championship, Alma Ata 1968/69).

10...a5

It turns out that if 10...e5 11 dxe5 dxe5?! White has the strong 12 ♘d5! ♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘d8 14 b4 (Euwe) or 14 ♗e3 (Filip). Evidently it was best for Black to play 11...♘xe5 12 ♘d5! ♘xd5 13 cxd5, when White has only a minimal advantage.

11 a3 ♘d8 12 e4 (now 12 b4 would have been a blank shot) **12...fxe4**

'Very risky was 12...e5?! 13 ♗g5 c6 14 c5!? with complications in the centre that are advantageous to White.' (Tal)

13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♘f7

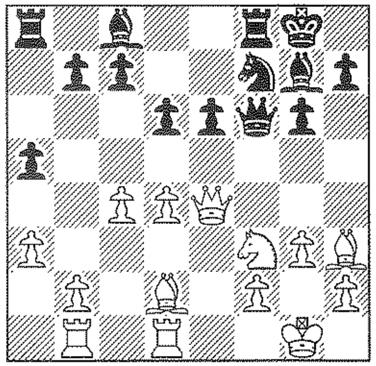
Methodically preparing ...e6-e5. 14...e5?! 15 dxe5 ♗f5 was premature on account of 16 ♕d5+ ♕f7 17 ♖a1 dxe5 18 ♘g5 (Euwe).

15 ♗h3!?

Tal was very proud of this move: White again prevents the freeing move ...e6-e5 (15...e5? 16 ♗xc8 and 17 ♕xb7). But I am not firmly convinced that this is the only way of fighting for an advantage.

15...♕f6 (threatening 16...d5, winning a pawn) **16 ♗d2**

Tal decided not to prevent this, since the resulting position very much appealed to him.



16...d5!?

According to Botvinnik, 16...e5!? came into consideration. According to Tal 'the quiet 16...c6 17 ♗c3 e5 18 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 19 dxe5 dxe5 with the threat of ...♘d6 gives roughly equal chances (*although after 20 c5! Black is worse – G.K.*), or 17...d5 in a version more favourable for Black,' although here too after 18 ♕e2 ♘d6 19 ♘e5 ♘xc4 20 ♘xc4 dxc4 21 f4 his position is worse.

I would add that 16...♗d7? does not work: 17 ♕xb7 ♘d8? 18 ♕xa8 ♘c6 (18...♗c6 19 ♕xa5 ♕xf3 20 d5 ♗d4 21 ♗g2! and wins – Tal) 19 ♕b7 ♕xf3 20 ♗e3 ♘xd4 21 ♗g2 ♗c6 22 ♕xc6 and wins.

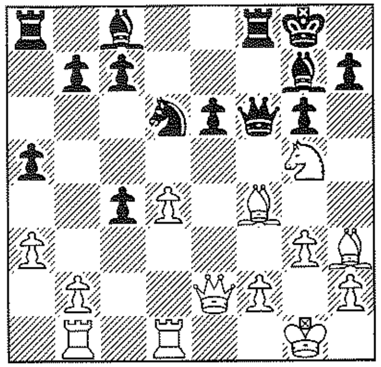
17 ♕e2 (of course, not 17 cxd5? exd5)

17...dxc4

In my opinion, the move ...d6-d5 could have been justified by 17...♘d6!? After this Tal gives 18 ♘e5 dxc4 19 ♖bc1 b5 20 b3 'with a powerful initiative'. But this evaluation is not fully convincing: after 20...cxb3 21 ♖xc7 ♕d8 complicated, unclear play would have begun – Black's passed pawn at b3 is alive and if 22 ♖c5 he can play 22...b4 23 axb4 a4.

18 ♗f4 ♘d6 19 ♘g5!

It would appear that Botvinnik underestimated this move, reckoning only on 19 ♘e5 b5. 'White's main aim is to exchange the knight at d6, after which his bishops will be able to attack the queenside pawns.' (Tal)



19...♖e8

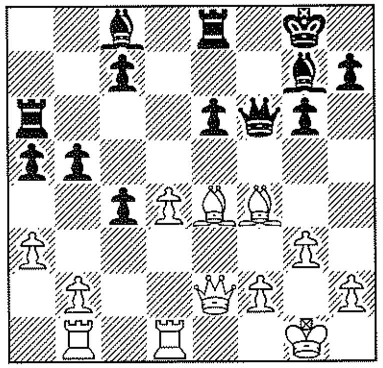
According to Tal – a forced loss of a tempo but, in my opinion, Black should have played 19...b5!?. For example: 20 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 with sharp play, or 20 a4 bxa4 21 ♘xe6 ♖e8 22 ♖e1 ♘f5 23 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 24 ♘xg7 ♖xe2 25 ♘xf5 ♖xe1+ 26 ♖xe1 ♗xf5 27 ♗xc7 ♔f7 28 d5 ♖e8 29 ♗e5, and although Black stands worse, he has the right to count on a draw.

20 ♗g2 ♖a6 (after 20...♗d7 21 ♘e4 ♘xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♗c6? 23 ♗xc6 bxc6 the c-pawns fall like ripe fruit) **21 ♘e4!**

An unexpected move! Now Black faces a passive defence.

21...♘xe4 22 ♗xe4 b5

Or 22...♕f7 23 ♕xc4 e5 24 ♗d5! ♗e6 25 dxe5 with an extra pawn.



23 b3 (breaking up Black's pawn phalanx) **23...cxb3 24 ♕xb5 ♖f8 25 ♕xb3**

'Simple and good, but even stronger was 25 ♖bc1! ♖b6 26 ♕xa5 with a clear advantage. The b3-pawn did not present any particular danger, but, taking account of the competitive situation, I did not want to worry my second.' (Tal)

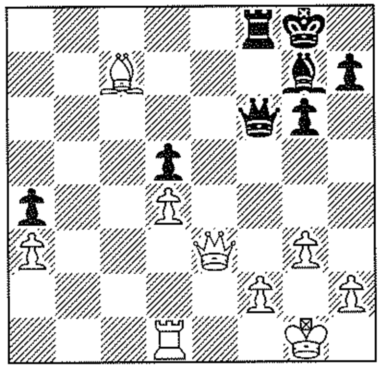
25...♖b6 26 ♕e3

Tal thought that 26 ♕c2 ♖xb1 27 ♕xb1 ♕e7 was not so clear, but it seems to me that here too after 28 ♕c1 White has a clear advantage.

26...♖xb1 27 ♗xb1 ♗b7 (an attempt to create counterplay at the cost of a pawn) **28 ♗a2!**

'If 28 ♗xc7?, then 28...♗h6 is unpleasant.' (Tal) In my opinion, after 29 f4! it is only Black who has any unpleasantness, whereas 28...♕f3! 29 ♕xf3 ♗xf3 30 ♖d2 ♖c8 deprives White of any winning chances: 31 ♖c2 ♗e4 32 ♗a2! ♗d5 33 ♗xd5 exd5 34 ♖c5 ♗xd4 35 ♖xd5 ♗xf2+ 36 ♔xf2 ♖xc7 37 ♖xa5 ♖c2+ with a dead draw.

28...♗d5 29 ♗xd5 exd5 30 ♗xc7 a4



31 ♖d3!

Prophylaxis! After 31 ♗e5 ♕f3! 32 ♖d3 ♕xe3 33 ♖xe3 ♖c8 Black has quite good compensation for the pawn.

31...♕f5 32 ♗e5 ♗h6

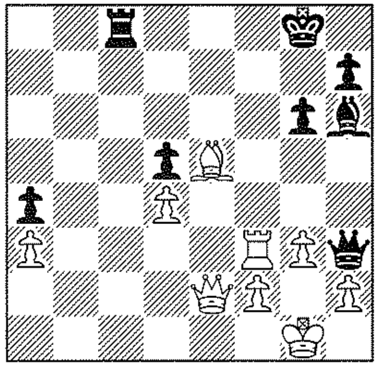
'After 32...♖e8?! 33 ♕e2! ♗xe5 34 ♖e3 the white heavy piece battery would have gone into action.' (Tal)

33 ♕e2 ♖c8 34 ♖f3!

A little trap in time-trouble, and the best move. If 34 ♔g2, then 34...♕e4+! 35 ♕xe4 (35 ♕f3!? ♖c2) 35...dxe4 and this endgame is most probably drawn: 36 ♖d1 ♖c3 37 d5 (37 ♗d6 ♗f8) 37...♖xa3 38 ♖d4 (38 d6? ♖d3 39 ♖xd3 exd3 40 d7 ♗g5 41 ♔f3 ♔f7) 38...♖d3 39 ♖xa4 ♖xd5 40 ♖xe4 with a draw.

34...♕h3?!

'Counting only on 35 ♖d3, but disillusionment awaits Black. 34...♖c2! was stronger. True, the rook endgame after 35 ♖xf5 ♖xe2 36 ♖f6 ♗g7 37 ♖a6 ♗xe5 38 dxe5 ♖xe5 39 ♖xa4 ♖e1+ 40 ♔g2 ♖a1 41 ♖a7 looks won for White.' (Tal) And indeed, with the king cut off it is difficult to save the game: 41...♖a2 42 ♔f3 d4 43 a4 d3 44 a5 d2 45 ♔e2 d1♕+ 46 ♔xd1 ♖xf2 47 a6 ♖a2 48 ♔c1 and wins. Even so, this was the best chance.



35 ♗c7! (both defence, and counterattack!) **35...♗f8?**

'Again overlooking a small tactical subtlety. 35...♕d7 was more tenacious, after which by 36 ♗f4 (*36 ♗b6!? – G.K.*) White would have gained an important tempo.' (Tal) And with it, objectively, also the game: 36...♗xf4 37 ♖xf4 ♖e8 38 ♕a6 etc.

36 ♕b5! (a typical Tal stroke!) **36...♕e6** (36...♕h5? 37 ♔g2 ♖xc7 38 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 39 ♕b8+ is hopeless) **37 ♗e5 ♕c6 38 ♕a5 ♖a8**

If instead Black tries 38...♗xa3? 39 ♖xa3 ♕c1+ 40 ♔g2 ♕xa3, then 41 ♕xd5+ ♔f8 42 ♗d6+.

39 ♕d2 ♖c8 40 ♔g2 ♕d7 41 h4 (on the attack!) **41...♕g4 1-0**

The sealed move. Black resigned without resuming, if only in view of 42 ♕a5 ♕d7 43 ♖f6 ♗xa3 44 ♖a6 ♗e7 45 ♖a7 ♕e6 46 ♕xa4. If the scores had been equal, Botvinnik would have fought on, but here he was mentally already beginning to prepare for the return match...

After two quiet draws in the 20th and 21st games, Tal won the match 12½-8½ (+6 -2 =13) and became the eighth world champion, the youngest in the history of chess: he was only twenty-three and a half (I managed to break this record precisely on Tal's birthday – 9 November 1985).

In place of the severe, unsmiling, ascetic scientist came a genuine artist of the chess stage, a reckless, kind and witty man. 'Misha often presented his thoughts in aphoristic form, he found special, vivid, sharp words for them,' recalls Yuri Averbakh. 'He was talented as a compère and in making people merry, especially at meals and banquets.

'I remember how in the morning after Tal was proclaimed world champion, a reporter asked how he felt. Misha promptly shot out: 'My head is filled with sunshine!' This impromptu remark delighted the journalist, although these words belonged to Yves Montand. But Botvinnik, on hearing of this, dryly commented: 'What has chess come to: the world championship has been won by a chatterbox!'

Meanwhile, the popularity of the 'chatterbox' knew no bounds. On match days people stood in droves on Tversk Boulevard, by the entrance to the Pushkin Theatre, watching the games on an enormous demonstration board. A crowd of many thousands met Tal at the station in Riga, and the most fanatical enthusiasts carried him from the train and, with cries of 'Misha, you're a genius!', took him to the station square, where a celebration took place.'

Not for the Faint-Hearted

Alas, Tal severely disappointed his supporters the following year by ignominiously losing the return match (details of which are given in the chapter on Botvinnik). And later, when there was talk of young talents, he could only joke: 'At that age I was already an ex-world champion.'

Thinking about Tal's subsequent fate, one involuntarily recalls Steinitz's aphorism: 'Chess in not for the faint-hearted.' The eighth champion was let down so often by his health (in total he had twelve operations), that another player would have simply given up serious competitions. But Tal, although he smoke and drank a lot, continued playing for a long time – and successfully! Why?

'His entire appearance, especially in his younger years, radiated some kind of aura,' writes Genna Sosonko. 'That face bent over the board, that stare of burning eyes, penetrating the board and the opponent, those moving lips, that smile which appeared on his inspired face when a combination had been found, that intense concentration of thought, pressure of thought I would say – all this created something that the weak of spirit could not withstand. And when this spirit was combined with the energy of youth in the late fifties and early sixties, he was invincible. "You, Mishik," the late Leonid Stein said to him in Riga in 1969 "are stronger in spirit than all of us." He was strong in spirit, like no one else. Even when his organism was destroyed, right to the end, to his last days, his spirit remained unbowed.'

Thus even after the fiasco in the return match Misha did not lose heart, and in the autumn of 1961 he won an exceptionally strong tournament in Bled: 1. Tal – 14½ out of 19; 2. Fischer – 13½; 3-5. Gligoric, Keres and Petrosian – 12½; 6-7. Geller and Trifunovic – 10½ etc. Here the youngest ex-champion, as he put it, realised that his two matches with Botvinnik had not been futile: along with his trademark sharp games, he also succeeded in winning several purely strategic ones, 'à la Botvinnik'.

Then came a share of 4th-5th places in the 29th USSR Championship (Baku 1961) and ... severe attacks of his kidney illness. In March 1962, less than two months before the start of the next Candidates tournament, Tal had a serious operation on his kidneys. And although, as usual, he was full of optimism, the four-cycle marathon on the exotic island of Curaçao ended in a new catastrophe for him – a share of last place. After the third cycle he had to withdraw from the tournament: he was again tormented by intolerable pain – the operation, alas, had not helped...

At that time it could have seemed that the career of the 'Riga magician' was coming to its end. In the autumn, prior to the Olympiad in Varna, he only barely made it into the USSR team (as Mikhail Nekhemevich joked, 'the medical inspection was not inferior to that which cosmonauts have to undergo') as second reserve – after Botvinnik, Petrosian, Keres, Spassky and Geller. First place on this low board was gained with a relatively modest result (+7 =6), but the play itself already resembled the Tal of old.

Game 132

M.Tal-H.Hecht

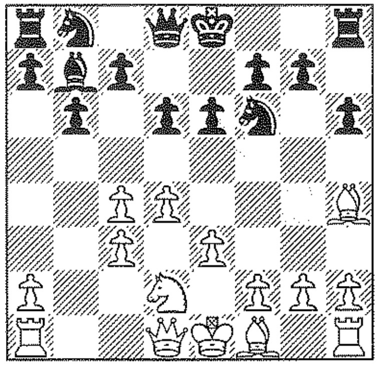
Varna Olympiad 1962

Queen's Indian Defence E13

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 5 ♗g5 ♗b7 6 e3 h6

The intensive development of this variation began in the 1980-1990s. Instead of 6...h6, 6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 8 ♘d2 ♘bd7 9 f3 ♕e7 10 e4 h6 is also possible, since if 11 ♗e3?! (11 ♗h4 is better) 11...e5 12 ♗d3 there is the unexpected counter 12...d5! (Kamsky-Ivanchuk, Linares 1993).

7 ♗h4 ♗xc3+ (the alternative is 7...g5 8 ♗g3 ♘e4, although both the classical 9 ♕c2 and the gambit 9 ♘d2 present Black with definite problems) **8 bxc3 d6 9 ♘d2**



Following Botvinnik! This is probably the most logical plan – the seizure of the centre by f2-f3 and e3-e4.

9...e5

Nowadays it is more usual to play 9...g5 10 ♗g3 and now:

1) 10...♘c6!? which can be met by 11 h4 ♖g8 12 hxg5 hxg5 13 ♖h6 ♕e7 14 ♕f3 ♖g6 15 ♖xg6 fxg6 16 ♗d3 0-0-0 17 ♕e2 ♖h8 18 0-0-0 ♖h6 19 f3 ♔b8 20 ♗f2 e5 21 g4 d5! with a sharp struggle in prospect (Bacrot-Adams, Sarajevo 2000);

2) 10...♕e7 11 h4 (11 a4 ♘c6! with equality, Dokhoian-Lerner, Lvov Zonal 1990; inferior is 11...a5?! 12 h4 ♖g8 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 ♕b3! with the initiative, Kasparov-Karpov, Leningrad 18th matchgame 1986) 11...♖g8 12 hxg5 hxg5 13 ♗e2!? (Bareev-Dolmatov, Minsk 1987; Kasparov-Psakhis, Murcia 2nd matchgame 1990).

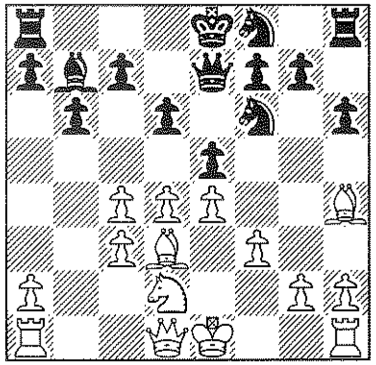
Generally speaking, pawn sacrifices and other 'drastic' measures are typical of White's play in this variation.

10 f3 ♕e7 11 e4 ♘bd7 12 ♗d3

Up until this point the two players have followed a very well-trodden path. Black's next move occurred in the game Borisenko-Kotov (22nd USSR Championship, Moscow 1955).

12...♘f8

Avoiding the classical 12...g5 (12...0-0, with the idea of ...♖fe8 and ...♘f8-g6, is unlikely to equalise) 13 ♗f2 ♘h5 (Botvinnik-Keres, 12th USSR Championship, Moscow 1940) – perhaps in view of 14 ♘f1! exd4 (14...f5!?; 14...♘g7!?) 15 cxd4 f5 16 ♘e3! fxe4 17 ♘f5 ♕f7 18 fxe4 ♘f4 19 0-0 with advantage to White (Tal-Mnatsakanian, 30th USSR Championship, Yerevan 1962).



13 c5?!

A novelty. This questionable pawn sacrifice was typical of the eighth world champion! In principle it is more advantageous to maintain the tension by either 13 ♘f1 ♘g6 14 ♗f2 ♘f4 15 ♘e3 or instead 13 ♕a4+ ♕d7 14 ♕c2.

13...dxc5 (neither 13...bxc5?! 14 ♖b1! nor 13...♘g6?! 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 ♗b5+ looks good) **14 dxe5 ♕xe5 15 ♕a4+ c6**

Tal thought that this was a mistake (because of the weakening of the d6-square) and that '15...♘6d7 was much stronger, although here too after 16 ♕c2 White's initiative is rather real.' But in my opinion, after 16...♘g6 17 ♗g3 ♘f4 Black has nothing to complain about. And in the game too, as we will see, things are not so bad for him.

16 0-0 ♘g6

If 16...♕xc3?! White has the unpleasant 17 ♘c4 b5 (17...♕xd3? 18 ♖fd1 b5 19 ♖xd3 bxa4 20 ♘d6+ ♔e7 21 ♘f5+!) 18 ♘d6+ ♔d7 19 ♘xb5! cxb5 20 ♗xb5+ ♔e7 21 ♖ac1! (more accurate than 21 e5 ♕d4+ 22 ♕xd4 cxd4 23 exf6+ gxf6) 21...♕e5 22 ♖fd1 a6 23 ♗c6 ♕c7 24 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 25 e5 with an attack.

17 ♘c4

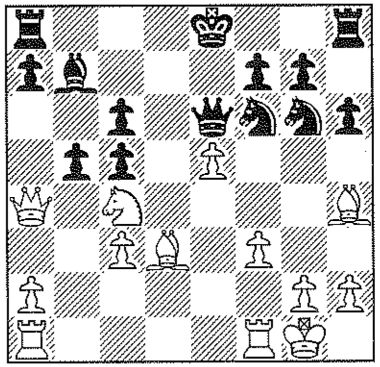
'If 17 ♗g3 the strongest is 17...♕e7 (17...♕xc3?! 18 ♗a6!), and 18 ♘c4 does not work on account of 18...b5.' (Tal) Here there is some misunderstanding: after 17 ♗g3? ♕xc3! 18 ♗a6? (18 ♘c4 0-0 is better) 18...b5 19 ♗xb5 0-0 it is time for White to resign.

17...♕e6 (17...b5? 18 ♘xe5 bxa4 19 ♘xg6 fxg6 20 e5 is bad) **18 e5!**

Trying to keep the king at e8. 'White begins a combination in anticipation of... a favourable endgame. This position does not promise anything more.' (Tal)

18...b5

If 18...♘xh4!? 19 ♘d6+ ♔f8 White was planning 20 ♖ae1! (20 ♕xh4? or 20 ♘xb7 is weaker because of 20...♕xe5).



19 exf6!!

'And here the temperamental Miguel Najdorf, who was watching the game, came up and... kissed me. This move has something in common with the well-known game Lilienthal-Capablanca (Hastings 1934/35), in which the young master quickly forced the capitulation of the ex-world champion. Hecht made his reply without thinking...' (Tal)

19...bxa4?

This would appear to be the decisive mistake. After 19...0-0! White, in the words of Tal, 'had a very strong rejoinder – 20 ♖ae1!, and if 20...♕d5, then 21 ♕c2 ♘xh4 22 ♘e5 with a very strong attack, while after 20...♕xe1 21 ♖xe1 bxa4 22 ♗xg6 fxg6 23 ♖e7 it is not possible to play 23...♖f7? because of the reply 24 ♘d6.'

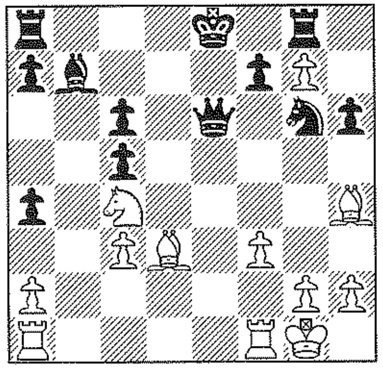
However, 20 ♖ae1 more probably deserves a question mark. Firstly, in the event of 20...♕d5 21 ♕c2 ♘xh4 22 ♘e5?! (it is better to play 22 ♖e5 ♕d8 23 ♖e7 bxc4 24 ♗h7+ ♔h8 25 fxg7+ ♔xg7 26 ♖xb7 ♕g5 27 ♗e4 with an insignificant advantage) 22...gxf6 White has no particular attack, for example: 23 ♗e4 ♕d6 24 ♘g4 f5 25 ♖d1 ♕g6 26 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 27 ♕xf5 ♗c8 28 ♕xc5 ♗xg4 29 fxg4 ♖ae8 30 ♖d6 ♖e6 31 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 32 g5 a6 etc.

Secondly, after 20...♕xe1! 21 ♖xe1 bxa4 22 ♗xg6 fxg6 23 ♖e7 Andrei Lilienthal discovered 23...g5! 24 ♖xg7+ (also after 24 ♖xb7 gxh4 25 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 26 ♖g6 ♖f7 27 ♖xh6+ ♖h7 White is fighting only for a draw) 24...♔h8 25 ♗g3 (25 ♘e5 ♖xf6; 25 ♗xg5 hxg5 26 ♖xb7 ♖xf6) 25...♗a6 26 ♘d6 (26 ♗e5? ♗xc4 27 f7 h5! 28 ♖xg5+ ♔h7 is bad; while after 26 ♘d2 ♖xf6 27 ♖c7 ♖e6 28 ♘e4 ♖b8! or 27 ♖d7 ♖f5 28 ♘e4 – 28 ♖d6 ♖d5 – 28...♗c4 29 a3 ♖d5 30 ♗d6 ♗d3 Black is the exchange up) 26...♖xf6 27 ♖c7 ♔g8 28 ♖xc6 ♗d3 29 ♖xc5 ♖b8 and a draw is limit of White's dreams.

And thirdly, it is clearly more promising for White to play 20 ♕c2! ♘xh4 21 fxg7 ♔xg7 22 ♖ae1 ♕f6 23 ♘e3 with good compensation for the pawn.

20 fxg7 ♖g8

Has Black now managed to parry the attack?

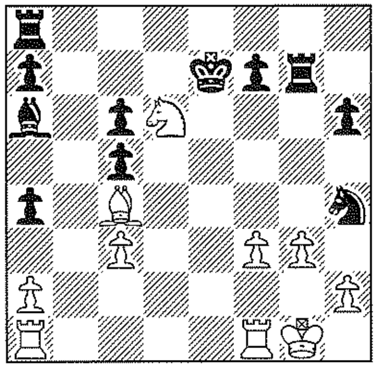


21 ♗f5!! (the point of the combination!) **21...♘xh4**

In the event of 21...♕xc4 Black is a whole queen to the good, but this does not help him: 22 ♖fe1+ ♕e6 23 ♖xe6+! fxe6 24 ♗xg6+ ♔d7 25 ♖d1+ ♔c7 26 ♗g3+ ♔b6 27 ♖b1+ ♔a6 28 ♗d3+ ♔a5 29 ♗c7 mate. Furthermore, the endgame after 21...♕xf5 22 ♘d6+ ♔d7 23 ♘xf5 ♘xh4 24 ♘xh4! is also dismal. Here Tal's suggestion of 24 ♖ad1+ ♔c7 25 ♘xh4 is less clear in view of 25...♗c8! (but not 25...♖xg7? 26 ♖fe1) 26 f4 (26 ♖fe1 ♗e6!) 26...♖xg7 (26...♗e6? 27 f5 ♗xa2 28 f6) 27 f5 ♖g4 28 g3 (28 ♘f3 ♖e4) 28...♗a6 29 ♖fe1.

According to analysis by Lilienthal, 21...♗a6 22 ♗xe6 fxe6 23 ♘d6+ ♔d7 24 ♘e4! is also to White's advantage, for example: 24...♗xf1 25 ♘f6+ ♔c7 (25...♔e7 26 ♘xg8+ ♔f7 27 ♘xh6+ ♔xg7 28 ♗g5 ♗d3 29 ♘g4) 26 ♗g3+ e5 27 ♘xg8 ♖xg8 28 ♔xf1 ♖xg7 29 ♖e1, or 24...♘xh4 25 ♘xc5+ ♔c7 26 ♘xa6+ ♔b6 27 ♘b4 ♖xg7 28 g3.

22 ♗xe6 ♗a6 (of course, not 22...fxe6? 23 ♘d6+ ♔e7 24 ♘xb7) **23 ♘d6+ ♔e7 24 ♗c4! ♖xg7 25 g3**



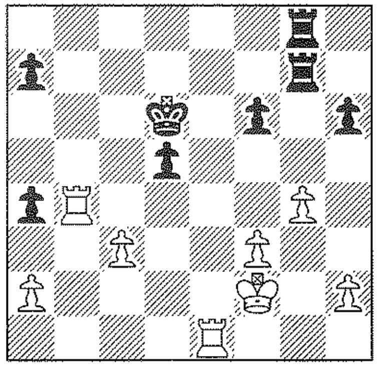
25...♔xd6?!

'A mistake: in such positions a bishop is stronger than a knight. Certain saving chances would have been retained by 25...♗xc4 26 ♘xc4 ♖d8.' (Tal)

26 ♗xa6 ♘f5?! (26...♖b8 was better) **27 ♖ab1 f6 28 ♖fd1+ ♔e7 29 ♖e1+ ♔d6 30 ♔f2 c4?!**

'30...h5 was nevertheless more tenacious, maintaining the knight in its important position.' (Tal) But it is not clear what to do after 31 ♖ed1+ ♔e7 32 ♗b7.

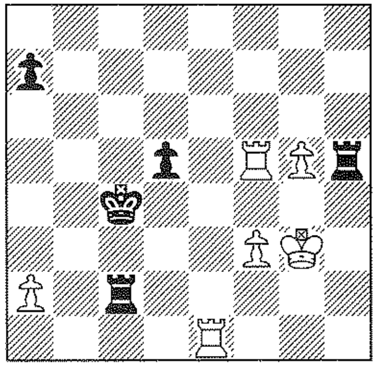
31 g4?! (31 ♗xc4 was simpler) **31...♘e7 32 ♖b7 ♖ag8 33 ♗xc4 ♘d5 34 ♗xd5 cxd5 35 ♖b4**



35...♖c8?!

The conversion of the advantage would have been made much more difficult by 35...h5! 36 h3 hxg4 37 hxg4 f5 38 ♔g3 fxg4 39 ♖xg4 a3.

36 ♖xa4 ♖xc3 37 ♖a6+ ♔c5 38 ♖xf6 h5 39 h3 hxg4 40 hxg4 ♖h7 41 g5 ♖h5 42 ♖f5 ♖c2+ 43 ♔g3 ♔c4



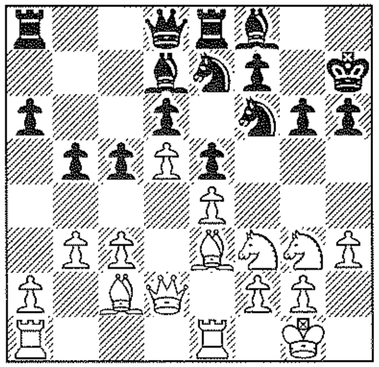
44 ♖ee5! d4 45 g6 ♖h1 46 ♖c5+ ♔d3 47 ♖xc2 ♔xc2 48 ♔f4 ♖g1 49 ♖g5 1-0

In view of the continuation 49...♖xg5 50 ♔xg5 d3 51 g7 d2 52 g8♕ d1♕ 53 ♕b3+ and White wins.

A month later came a good result in the 30th USSR Championship (Yerevan 1962): 1. Korchnoi – 14 out of 19; 2-3. Taimanov and Tal – 13½ etc. However, soon the unbearable pains resumed, and Tal had to undergo a second, equally serious operation. For several years the illness receded...

In the spring of 1963 he worked as a commentator on the Botvinnik-Petrosian match, and it was only in July that he returned to tournament life, easily winning an international tournament in the Hungarian town of Miskolcz: (1. Tal – 12½ out of 15; 2. Bronstein – 10½). In one of the games he succeeded in winning with a classic piece sacrifice.

Game 133
M.Tal-T.Ghitescu
Asztalos Memorial Tournament,
Miskolcz 1963

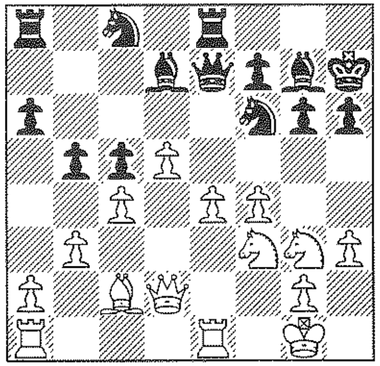


19 ♗xc5!

'This sacrifice owes its appearance to Bronstein, since literally that same day he told me about his game with Rojahn (Moscow Olympiad 1956): 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 ♘g5 d5 5 exd5 ♘a5 6 d3 h6 7 ♘f3 e4 8 dxe4!? ♘xc4 9 ♕d4, and subsequently the avalanche of white pawns swept away everything in its path. The idea of the sacrifice in the diagram position is roughly the same.' (Tal)

But there is also a significant difference: with Bronstein it was the 'joke of a genius' (the sacrifice was incorrect), whereas with Tal it was completely justified play 'by position', which has become a typical procedure.

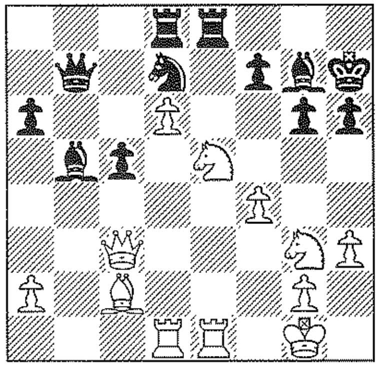
19...dxc5 20 ♘xe5 ♘c8 21 f4 ♕e7 22 c4! ♗g7 23 ♘f3 (here it was more accurate to play 23 ♖ad1! ♘d6 24 ♗d3 and Black cannot buy off his opponent by returning the piece)



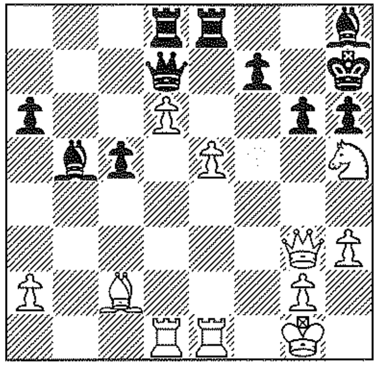
23...bxc4

If 23...♘h5?! White intended 24 ♘xh5 ♗xa1 25 e5! (but not 25 ♖xa1?! gxh5 26 e5+ ♔g8 27 ♕d3 f5) with an irresistible attack.

24 bxc4 (24 e5 ♘xd5 25 ♕xd5 ♘b6 is unclear) **24...♘d6 25 e5** (25 ♗d3 ♘fxe4!) **25...♘xc4 26 ♕c3** (26 ♕d3?! ♘b2!) **26...♗b5 27 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 28 d6 ♘xd6 29 exd6 ♕b7?!** (it was more tenacious to play 29...♕f8 30 ♕xc5 etc.) **30 ♘e5 ♘d7**



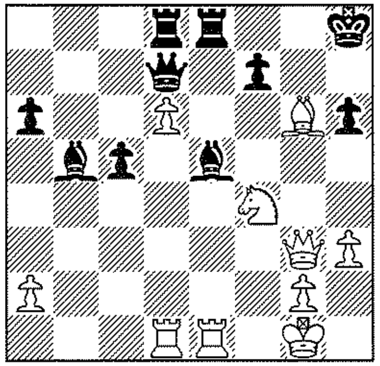
31 ♘h5! (with the help of a two-move manoeuvre, writes Tal, White forces the exchange on e5, after which his pawns are again 'in order') **32...♗h8 32 ♕g3 ♘xe5 33 fxe5 ♕d7**



34 ♘f4!

A simple combination, leading to a decisive advantage.

34...♗xe5 35 ♗xg6+ ♔h8 (or 35...fxg6 36 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 37 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 38 ♕f6+)

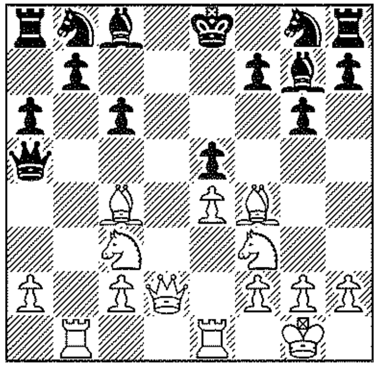


36 ♗xf7 ♗d4+ (Black is not saved by either 36...♕xf7 37 ♘g6+, or 36...♗xf4 37 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 38 ♕xf4) **37 ♖xd4 ♖xe1+ 38 ♕xe1 ♕xf7** (if 38...cxd4, then 39 ♕e5+ ♔h7 40 ♕e4+ ♔h8 41 ♕g6 ♕xd6 42 ♘e6) **39 ♕e5+ ♕g7 40 ♕xc5 ♗c6 41 ♖d2 1-0**

After several months of successful performances the time arrived for a serious test – the Interzonal tournament (Amsterdam 1964). And Tal, admitted as part of the FIDE quota, was able to show that the 'horrors of Curaçao' had long been forgotten: he went through the entire marathon distance undefeated, scoring 11 wins and, by sharing 1st-4th places with Larsen, Smyslov and Spassky, qualified for the Candidates.

The finish of the tournament was nervy and dramatic: I will remind you that FIDE allowed not more than three USSR representatives through to the next stage. In the last, 23rd round, Tal, in order to finish half a point ahead of Stein, had to win 'to order' against Tringov, which he achieved with the help of a combination involving the sacrifice of two pieces.

Game 134
M.Tal-G.Tringov
Interzonal Tournament, Amsterdam 1964



13 ♕d6! ♕xc3 14 ♖ed1 ♘d7 15 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 16 ♘g5+ ♔e8 17 ♕e6+ 1-0

In view of mate in two moves.

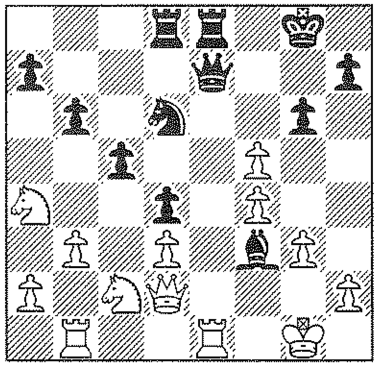
Strangely enough, in the autumn of that year the Soviet Chess Federation did not include Tal in the USSR team to compete in the Olympiad in Tel Aviv. Despite this setback, a couple of weeks before the 'tournament of nations' he played excellently on board one for 'Daugava' in the USSR Team Cup (4½ out of 6).

There, in particular, he gained with Black a memorable win over Smyslov, of which he was very proud: even 15 years later he said that this game had afforded him the greatest aesthetic pleasure.

Game 135

V.Smyslov-M.Tal

USSR Team Cup, Moscow 1964



24...♕e2!!

A spectacular leap! 'It is not often that one has to sacrifice queen for rook, in order to transpose into... a superior minor piece endgame.' (Tal)

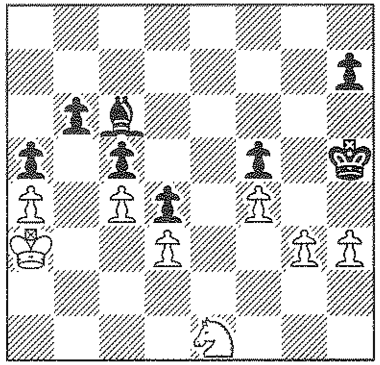
25 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 26 ♕xe2

'Both players were already somewhat short of time, and so Smyslov instantly rejected 26 ♕c1. After this I was intending 26...♖g2+ 27 ♔f1 ♖xh2 28 ♘e1 ♗d5 29 ♖b2 (*29 ♘b2?! ♖e8 30 ♘c4 ♗xc4! 31 bxc4 ♘xf5 32 ♖b2 ♘xg3+ 33 ♔g1 ♖ee2! – G.K.*) 29...♖h1+ 30 ♔f2 ♖e8, when it is very hard for White to bring his awkwardly placed forces into play.' (Tal) However, here 31 fxg6 is not altogether clear, so instead of 30...♖e8 Black should play 30...♘xf5! 31 g4 ♘e3 32 ♔g3 ♖e8 33 f5 h5 or 32...h5!? is simpler.

26...♗xe2 27 ♘b2 gxf5 28 ♖e1 ♗h5 29 ♘c4 ♘xc4 30 bxc4 ♖e8 31 ♔f2 ♖xe1 32 ♔xe1?! (according to Tal, 32 ♘xe1 and ♘f3-e5 was more tenacious) **32...♔f8 33 ♔d2 ♔e7 34 ♘e1 a6 35 a4 a5!**

Fixing a weakness – a textbook procedure in a bishop against knight ending! 35...♗e8?! was inaccurate because of 36 a5! bxa5 37 ♘f3.

36 ♔c2 (to the aid of the a4-pawn) **36...♗e8 37 ♔b3 ♗c6 38 ♔a3 ♔f6 39 ♔b3 ♔g6 40 ♔a3 ♔h5 41 h3**

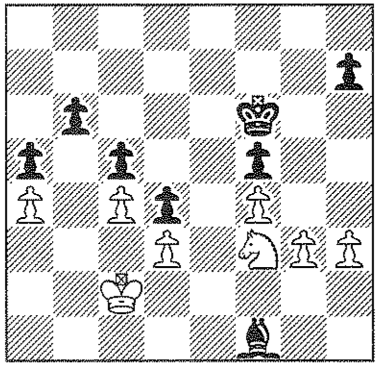


Here the game was adjourned and Black sealed his next move. There was little time for analysis – only a few hours...

41...♔g6 42 ♔b3 ♔g7 43 ♔a3 ♔f6 44 ♔b3 ♗e8! (with the king on b3 the bishop plans a reverse raid – to d1) **45 ♘g2**

The attempt 45 ♘f3 ♗h5 46 ♘e5 does not work on account of 46...♗d1+ 47 ♔a3 ♔e6! 48 ♘c6 ♗c2 49 ♘e5 h6! 50 g4 ♗d1 and White is in zugzwang.

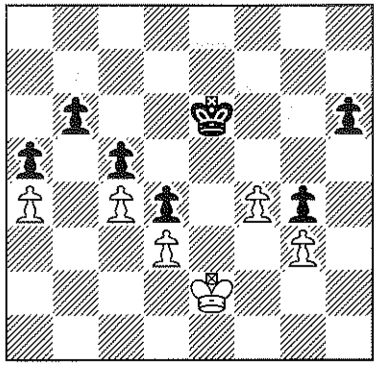
45...♗h5 46 ♔c2 ♗e2 47 ♘e1 ♗f1 48 ♘f3



'In the event of 48 h4 the bishop returns to c6 and the king penetrates among White's kingside pawns.' (Tal)

48...♗xh3

Not bad, but after 48...h6!? 49 ♘e5! ♗xh3 50 ♔d2! (50 ♘d7+ ♔e7! 51 ♘xb6 ♔d8! 52 ♘d5 ♗g2 53 ♘f6 ♔e7! 54 ♘g8+ ♔e6 55 ♘xh6 ♗h3! 56 ♔d2 ♔f6 and wins – Emms) 50...♔e6 51 ♔d1 ♗g4+ 52 ♘xg4 fxg4 53 ♔e2 an amazing pawn endgame could have arisen.



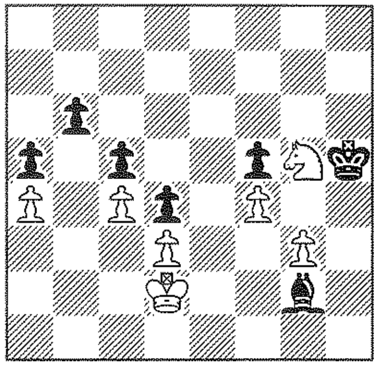
Analysis diagram

Tal did not go in for it, because in his cursory adjournment analysis he considered only 53...♔f5?! 54 ♔f1 h5 55 ♔g1 h4 56 gxh4! ♔xf4 57 ♔g2 g3 58 h5 ♔g5 59 ♔xg3 ♔xh5 60 ♔h3 with a draw.

But soon the Soviet master Shatskes pointed out a very fine way for Black to win – 53...h5! 54 ♔d1 ♔d7!, and wherever the white king moves, the pawn breakthrough is decisive: 55 ♔e1 b5!! (an outside passed pawn!) 56 cxb5 c4! 57 f5 h4 58 f6 h3 59 f7 ♔e7 60 b6 h2 61 b7 h1♕+, or 55 ♔d2 b5! 56 cxb5 h4!! (again an outside passed pawn!) 57 gxh4 g3 58 ♔e2 g2 59 ♔f2 c4! etc.

55 ♔e2! is more cunning, since now after 55...b5 56 cxb5 Black does not win by either 56...h4 57 gxh4 g3 58 h5 g2 59 ♔f2 c4 60 h6 cxd3 61 h7 d2 62 h8♕ g1♕+ 63 ♔xg1 d1♕+, or 56...c4 57 f5! h4 58 b6 hxg3 59 b7 ♔c7 60 f6 cxd3+ 61 ♔xd3 g2 62 b8♕+ ♔xb8 63 f7 g1♕ 64 f8♕+. But the cool 55...♔d8!! (the corresponding square!) dislodges the white king from e2, and then the deadly breakthrough follows.

49 ♘g5 ♗g2 50 ♘xh7+ ♔g7 51 ♘g5 ♔g6 52 ♔d2 ♗c6 53 ♔c1 ♗g2! 54 ♔d2 ♔h5



55 ♘e6

There is nothing else: 55 ♔e2 ♔g4 56 ♔f2 ♗c6 57 ♘f7 ♗xa4 58 ♘h6+ ♔h5 59 ♘xf5 ♗d7 60 ♘d6 a4 61 ♘e4 a3 62 ♘d2 ♗a4 and wins, or 55 ♘f7 ♔g4 56 ♘h6+ ♔xg3 57 ♘xf5+ ♔xf4 58 ♘e7 ♔e5 59 ♔c2 (59 ♘c8? ♗c6 60 ♘xb6 ♔d6) 59...♔e6 60 ♘g6 ♗c6 61 ♔b3 ♔f6 62 ♘f4 ♔f5 and the king breaks through to the d3-pawn.

55...♔g4 56 ♘c7 ♗c6 57 ♘d5 ♔xg3 58 ♘e7 ♗d7!

Avoiding the unclear 58...♗xa4 59 ♘xf5+ ♔xf4 60 ♘e7 ♔e5 61 ♘c8!, for example: 61...♗d7?! 62 ♘xb6 ♗c6 63 ♔c2 ♔d6?! 64 ♔b3 ♔c7 65 ♘a4 with a draw.

59 ♘d5 ♗xa4 60 ♘xb6 ♗e8

'To be frank, even now I can't find the reason behind this move. 60...♗c6! 61 ♘d5 ♔f3 62 ♘e7 ♗d7 63 ♘d5 a4 would have won easily.' (Tal)

61 ♘d5 ♔f3 62 ♘c7 ♗c6 63 ♘e6 a4 64 ♘xc5 a3 65 ♘b3

Nor is 65 ♘e6 suitable due to 65...a2 66 ♘xd4+ ♔xf4 67 ♘b3 ♗a4 68 ♘a1 (the knight is crippled) 68...♔g3.

65...a2 66 ♔c1 ♔xf4 67 ♔b2 ♔e3 68 ♘a5 ♗e8 69 c5 f4 70 c6 ♗xc6 71 ♘xc6 f3 72 ♘e5 f2 0-1

A successful year in 1964 concluded with a fully worthy 'bronze' in the 32nd USSR Championship (Kiev 1964/65): 1. Korchnoi –

15 out of 19; 2. Bronstein – 13; 3. Tal – 12½; 4. Stein – 12 etc.

In this tournament, in the opinion of Mikhail Nekhemevich, he did not have any particular creative achievements, but even so I would single out one fine game. There was a double-edged struggle with chances for both sides, and therefore it was very typical of the end of the 20th century. But at the same time, surprisingly, it was imbued with the romantic spirit of the masters of the 19th century, the spirit of the legendary Morphy.

Game 136
M.Tal-V.Lyavdansky
USSR Champinoship, Kiev 1964/65
Sicilian Defence B83

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♗e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 f4 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 ♗d7 10 ♕e1

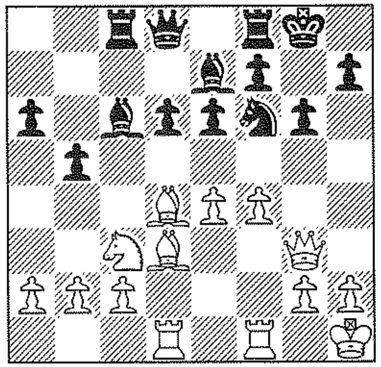
Some years later, when this plan of attack was rendered harmless, they turned to 10 ♘b3.

10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗c6 12 ♗d3 (12 ♕g3 g6 is equal) **12...g6**

This prophylaxis, which strengthens the bishop at d4, is not essential. The established way to equalise is 12...♘d7! and ...e6-e5.

13 ♖d1 a6 14 ♔h1 ♖c8 (14...b5?! is inferior due to 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♗xe5! ♘d7 17 ♗e4 with unpleasant pressure) **15 ♕g3 b5**

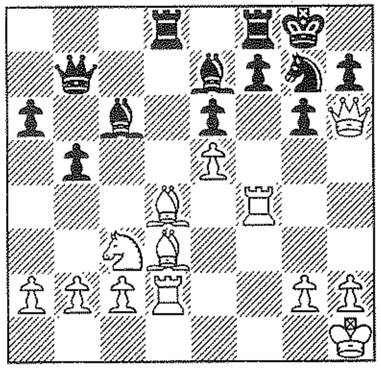
But not 15...♘h5?! 16 ♕e3 ♘xf4? 17 ♗b6!



16 e5

Perhaps this advance is slightly premature, but in any case the combination of the moves ♗d3, ♖d1 and ♕g3 is not especially promising.

16...dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘h5 18 ♕g4 ♕c7 19 ♕h3 ♘g7 20 ♕h6 ♕b7 21 ♖d2 ♖cd8 22 ♖f4



A typical Scheveningen duel: White is concentrating his forces on the kingside, but Black's position remains fairly solid.

22...♘f5!?

After the standard 22...b4 23 ♘e4 Black would have had to exchange his powerful bishop – 23...♗xe4, since after 23...♖xd4?! 24 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 25 exf6 ♘h5 26 ♖xd4 ♘xf6 his compensation for the exchange is clearly insufficient.

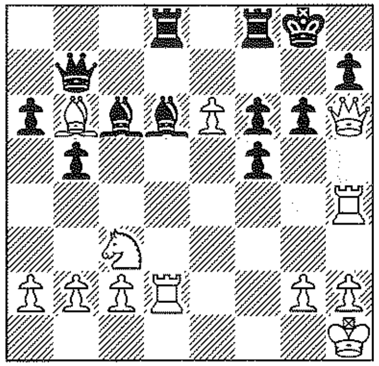
It was for this reason that Lyavdansky decided to change sharply the character of the play, by, on the contrary, forcing the opponent to give up his light-squared bishop. For White this is an alarm signal: he can now hope only for an attack, based on the opening of the a1-h8 diagonal. And at this moment Tal begins a lengthy combination, which in the end brings him a brilliant win.

23 ♗xf5 exf5 24 e6! f6 25 ♖h4 ♗d6

The only move: if 25...♗b4? White would have landed the crushing blow 26 ♗xf6!!, for example: 26...♗xg2+ (avoiding a picturesque finish – 26...♖xd2? 27 ♕xg6+! hxg6 28 ♖h8 mate) 27 ♖xg2 ♖xf6 28 ♖xb4 ♖xe6 29 h3! and Black does not have full compensation for the piece.

26 ♗b6!

Another spectacular stroke.

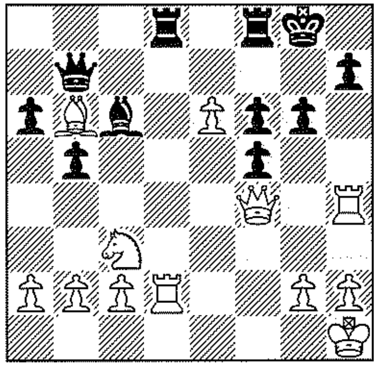


26...♗f4?

This loses almost by force. But was Black's 22nd move really so bad? By summoning the help of our 'silicon friend' and checking everything carefully, we discover something extraordinary: 26...♖fe8!! 27 ♗xd8 ♖xe6. A fairy-tale position! Despite his extra rook, White encounters great difficulties with the defence of his king: 28 ♔g1 ♗c5+ 29 ♖hd4 (29 ♔f1? leads to mate: 29...♗xg2+! 30 ♖xg2 ♕f3+) 29...♕d7! (not 29...♗xg2?! 30 ♕h4) 30 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 and Black has excellent prospects.

It is interesting to speculate as to who would have won the game, if in the diagram position the players had suddenly changed places. Perhaps 26...♖fe8!! would have been found 35 years earlier...

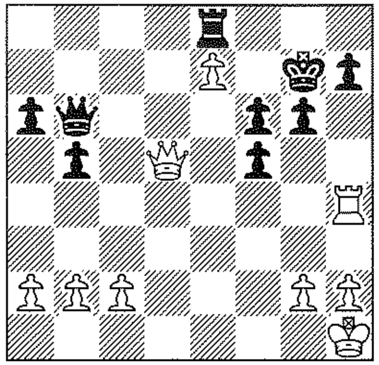
27 ♕xf4



27...♖xd2

Missing the best practical chance – 27...g5!, although here there is a more than tempting queen sacrifice: 28 ♗xd8! gxf4 29 e7 ♖e8 30 ♖xf4 b4 31 ♘d1 ♖xe7 (one way or another, Black must get rid of the dangerous pawn) 32 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 33 ♖f1 ♗b5 34 ♖g1 f4 35 ♖d4 and Black faces a difficult struggle to survive.

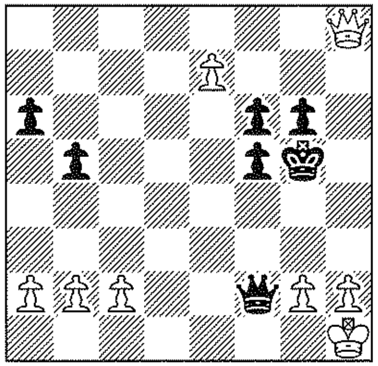
28 ♕xd2 ♕xb6 (for an instant Lyavdansky breathed freely, but... only for an instant!) **29 e7! ♖e8 30 ♘d5 ♗xd5 31 ♕xd5+ ♔g7**



32 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 33 ♕f7+ ♔h6 34 ♕xe8

Black's only hope is perpetual check.

34...♕f2 35 ♕h8+ ♔g5



36 h4+!

The final, deadly shot, which Tal had to foresee when he began this combination 13 moves earlier.

36...♔g4 37 e8♕ ♕f1+ 38 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 39 ♔g1 ♕c1+ 40 ♔f2 ♕f4+ 41 ♔e2 1-0

Odd Man out

Six months later the long-awaited inaugural series of Candidates matches began. FIDE had decided to replace the old 'tournament of eight' with a series of knock-out matches. The quarter-final and semi-final Candidates matches were to be the best of 10 games, with 12 in the final. Tal ended up in one half of the draw with Portisch, Larsen and Ivkov; and in the other, which was obviously the stronger half, were Keres, Spassky, Smyslov and Geller. These pairings appeared to give Tal a clear road into the final. However, the matches with Portisch and especially Larsen looked by no means like an easy stroll...

With his erudition and solid positional style, Lajos Portisch was sometimes known as 'Hungarian Botvinnik'. It is hardly surprising that Tal's dashing tactical impromptus altogether unsettled him (as shown by their clash in the Amsterdam Interzonal, which, after some inconceivable, incorrect Tal sacrifices, ended with a repetition of moves in a time scramble).

But in the match, held in the summer of 1965 in the Yugoslav town of Bled, Portisch battled with all his might. The opening game was adjourned in a slightly superior endgame for Tal, but ended a draw. Then in the second game the Hungarian grandmaster surprised his opponent, by choosing the Caro-Kann for virtually the first time in his life. 'This open copying of Botvinnik seemed to me somewhat straightforward,' writes Tal, 'and when in turn I avoided the well-beaten path, Portisch found himself in an unfamiliar situation. He played inaccurately, I sharpened the play...'

Game 137

M.Tal-L.Portisch

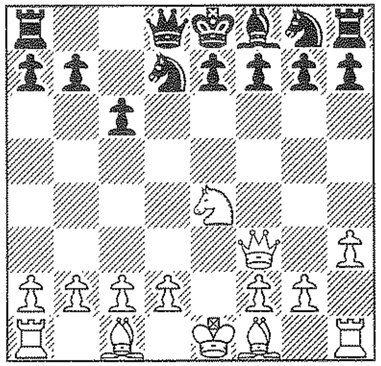
Candidates Match, Bled 1965, 2nd game

Caro-Kann Defence B10

1 e4 c6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♘f3 dxe4?! (3...♗g4! is better – *Game No.69*) **4 ♘xe4 ♗g4**

In his games with Smyslov (Moscow 17th matchgame 1958) and Lutikov (Moscow 1966) Botvinnik preferred 4...♘f6.

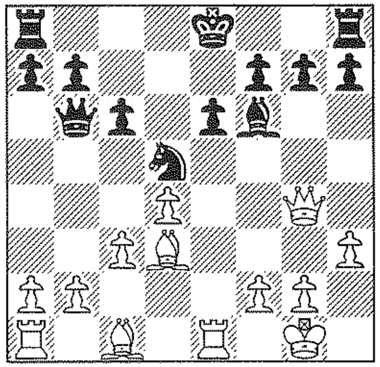
5 h3 ♗xf3 (5...♗h5 is met by 6 ♘g3!, when 6...♗g6? is plain bad after 7 h4 h6 8 ♘e5 ♗h7 9 ♕h5 etc.) **6 ♕xf3 ♘d7** (6...e6!?) **7 d4** (7 ♘g5?! ♘gf6 8 ♕b3 e6 9 ♕xb7 ♘d5!, Fischer-Cardoso, Portoroz Interzonal 1958)



7...♘gf6 8 ♗d3 ♘xe4 9 ♕xe4 e6 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 c3 ♘f6 12 ♕h4

Here the queen is a little misplaced. Black has played the opening passively and although he has a fairly solid position, the retreat 12 ♕e2! would have given White an enduring plus, by virtue of his bishop pair.

12...♘d5 13 ♕g4 ♗f6 (of course, not 13...0-0? 14 ♗h6 ♗f6 15 ♕e4 and wins) **14 ♖e1** (or 14 ♕e4 ♘e7! with equality) **14...♕b6!**



A strong move, pinning down the bishop at c1. The routine 14...0-0?! allows a regrouping that is advantageous to the opponent: 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♖ad1 ♕b6 17 ♗c1!

A similar motif occurred in one of my games with Karpov (Seville 10th matchgame 1987): 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7 5 ♘f3 ♘gf6 6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7 c3 ♗g4 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 e6 10 ♗c4 ♗e7 11 0-0 ♘d5 12 ♗e3 ♕b6! 13 ♕e2 0-0 14 ♖ad1 ♗d6 15 ♗b3 ♘xe3 16 fxe3 c5 17 ♖f3 ♖ae8 with a quick draw.

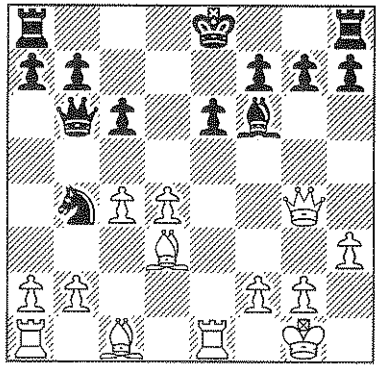
After 14...♕b6! we reach an important moment in the game. White needs to do something, and it is here that the most interesting part begins:

15 c4?!

Sharply changing the character of the play. Tal considered 15 a3 to be correct, but in my opinion it is better to be patient with 15 ♖e2! (or 15 a4 a5 16 ♖e2!?) 15...0-0 16 ♗h6 ♖fd8 17 ♖d1 c5 18 dxc5 ♕xc5 19 ♗c1 with a minimal advantage.

15...♘b4

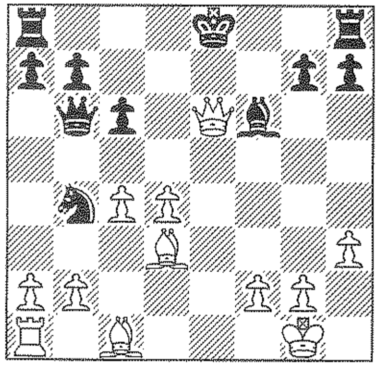
If 15...♘e7?! White was intending 16 d5! cxd5 17 cxd5 ♘xd5 18 ♕a4+ with the initiative for the pawn. Or 15...h5!? 16 ♕f3!? ♘b4 17 d5 0-0-0 18 ♗e3 with a highly promising position (Dvoretsky).



16 ♖xe6+

There is nowhere else to go: otherwise White loses his d4-pawn. It is rare to see such reckless play in a Candidates match! In a game with Miagmarsuren at the Olympiad in Nice (1974), to the great horror of the leader of the Soviet delegation, Tal also gave up a rook on e6, and far more correctly...

16...fxe6 17 ♕xe6+



'Here Black was faced with the problem: how to punish the opponent for his "recklessness". After the game Portisch admitted that he had seen the rook sacrifice, but did not consider it dangerous; when it nevertheless occurred, he became ill at ease. Only nervousness can explain why he replied instantaneously, without thinking.' (Tal)

17...♔f8?!

'I was upset: so much time and effort had been spent on the analysis of the most complex and attractive variations – and not one of them was to occur on the board!' (Tal)

If 17...♔d8 there is nothing better than 18 ♕d6+ ♔e8 19 ♕e6+, but here psychology again comes into play: who would agree to a draw with an extra rook? White's hopes were mainly associated with the 'refutation' 17...♗e7!? 18 ♗g6+!! (18 ♗xh7 c5!; 18 ♗g5? ♕c7 19 ♖e1 ♘xd3! 20 ♗xe7 ♕d7!) 18...♔d8 (not 18...hxg6? 19 ♗g5 ♕c7 20 ♖e1 ♕d7 21 ♕xg6+!) 19 ♗f5 ♕xd4 (19...♕c7? 20 ♗f4 ♕c8 21 ♕e4) 20 ♗f4.

This position greatly appealed to Tal, and in his commentary he gave the approximate variation 20...♖e8 21 ♖e1! (*not wishing to take a draw by 21 ♗e5 ♕d2 22 ♗f4 – G.K.*) 21...g6 (21...♘c2? 22 ♖e5; 21...♘d3?! 22 ♖e4!) 22 ♗e3 (*? – G.K.*) 22...♕d6 23 ♗xa7 ♕xe6 (*? – G.K.*) 24 ♗b6+ ♔c8 (24...♔d7?? 25 ♗xe6+ ♔d6 26 c5 mate) 25 ♗xe6+ ♔b8 26 ♗d7. But after 26...♖f8 27 ♖xe7 ♖xa2 and 28...♘d3 Black is alright, to say nothing of the fact that 23...♔c7! leaves him with a decisive material advantage. However, as Dvoretsky has shown, after 22 ♗g4! Black can maintain the balance only by a series of forced moves: 22...♘d3 (22...h5? 23 ♖d1 ♘d3 24 ♗e5!) 23 ♖e4 ♕xf2+ 24 ♔h2 ♕g1+!! (24...♘c5? 25 ♕e5) 25 ♔xg1 ♗c5+ 26 ♗e3! ♖xc6 27 ♖xe6 a5!, securing the c5-square for his knight.

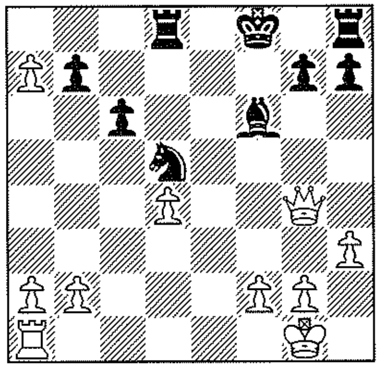
18 ♗f4 ♖d8

18...♖e8? fails to 19 ♗d6+ ♗e7 20 ♖e1 ♕d8 21 ♖c3! and 18...♕d8?! is met by 19 ♖e1 ♗e7 (19...g5 20 ♗d6+ ♔g7 21 ♗xb4 with a powerful attack) 20 ♗b1, with the intention of ♖e3 or ♖e5.

19 c5 ♘xd3! 20 cxb6!?

It was possible to force a draw – 20 ♗h6!? (20 ♗d6+? ♖xd6 21 ♕xd6+ ♗e7) 20...♕xb2! (not 20...♕c7? 21 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 22 ♗xg7!) 21 ♕xf6+ ♔e8 22 ♕e6+, but Tal was 'still out for blood'...

20...♘xf4 21 ♕g4 ♘d5 22 bxa7



The critical position. Black has good compensation for the queen, and he only has to bring his h8 rook into play and neutralise the audacious pawn at a7.

22...♔e7?

'I saw the strong move 22...g6!, but I decided to remove my king from the danger zone, especially since checks by the heavy pieces are not dangerous. But I overlooked the quiet move of the b-pawn.' (Portisch)

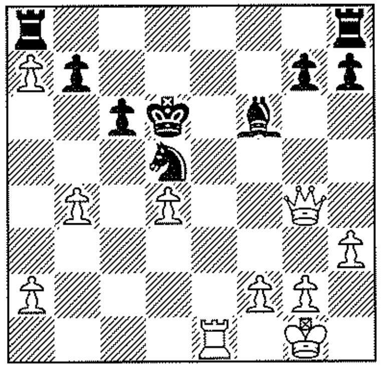
'How the game would have developed after 22...g6, I honestly do not know. But I was relying on the strength of the a7-pawn.' (Tal) However, after 23 ♖e1 ♔g7 24 a8♕ ♖xa8 25 ♕d7+ ♔h6 26 ♕xb7 it is hard for White to count on anything more than a draw.

23 b4! (far more cunning than the direct 23 ♖e1+ ♔d6 24 ♕g3+ ♔d7 25 ♕g4+ ♔c7!)

23...♖a8?

Tal's recommendation 23...♔d6 (if instead 23...♘xb4? then 24 ♖b1) 24 b5 ♔c7 was also insufficient in view of 25 ♕g3+ ♖d6 26 ♖e1 ♖hd8 27 ♖e6 ♘b6 28 a4 ♘a8 29 bxc6 bxc6 30 a5 h5 31 h4 ♗xd4 (there is no longer anything else) 32 ♖e7+ ♖8d7 33 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 34 ♕b3 with a clear advantage. Perhaps the only chance of defending was 23...♘c7! (Aronin) 24 ♖e1+ ♔f7 25 ♕g3 ♘d5.

24 ♖e1+ ♔d6 (or 24...♔d8 25 b5)



25 b5 (with the threats of 26 bxc6 bxc6 27 ♕e6+ ♔c7 28 ♖c1 and 26 b6 ♘xb6 27 ♖b1) **25...♖xa7?** (suicidal: 25...♖hd8 26 b6 ♘xb6 27 ♕f4+ ♔d7 28 ♖b1 ♔c8 29 ♖xb6 ♖xa7 was more tenacious) **26 ♖e6+ ♔c7 27 ♖xf6! 1-0**

Portisch levelled the scores in the third game, but in the fourth he lost after choosing the French with ...d5xe4 and coming under a crushing attack (this time with a bishop sacrifice). The fifth game became the real turning point, when Tal succeeded in saving a difficult ending after the adjournment. He then drew the sixth and won the seventh and eighth games, and with them also the match: 5½-2½.

Just two weeks later, also in Bled, the semi-final match with Bent Larsen began. Tal was confident of winning (the score in their previous meetings was in his favour: +3 -0 =2), but his form left something to be desired. This was a severe test! The Dane won at the start and was leading after five games: 3-2. In the sixth game the ex-champion levelled the scores, by refuting (with the help of a knight sacrifice!) a dubious variation of the Alekhine Defence. But then miracles began to occur...

The seventh game was incredibly sharp, tense and full of errors by both sides, resulting in a draw on the 91st move in an ending with rook and pawn against knight and pawn. They adjourned both the eighth game, which ended in a draw, and the ninth, which was also uncommonly dramatic: after outplaying his opponent and driving him into time-trouble, Tal suddenly made a suicidal pawn move and found himself in a lost endgame after a furious time scramble – but on the resumption Larsen fell into the only trap and a theoretical draw was reached.

'Thus before the last, 10th game,' recalls Mikhail Nekhemevich, 'I had an advantage: the white pieces plus a good mood. In addition, at that time I believed in my ability to play decisive games.' I should remind you that in the event of a draw the match score would have become 5-5 and the winner would have been decided by drawing lots. It need hardly be said that this game provoked enormous interest and that the auditorium was packed.

Game 138

M.Tal-B.Larsen

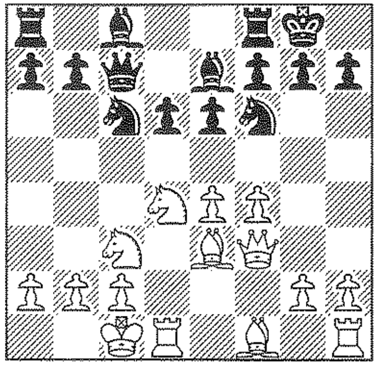
Candidates Match, Bled 1965, 10th game

Sicilian Defence B82

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 f4 ♗e7 8 ♕f3!? (one of the sharpest variations) **8...0-0**

Later 8...e5 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 f5 ♕a5 was also played, but after 11 0-0-0 and ♗c4 the game usually developed in White's favour.

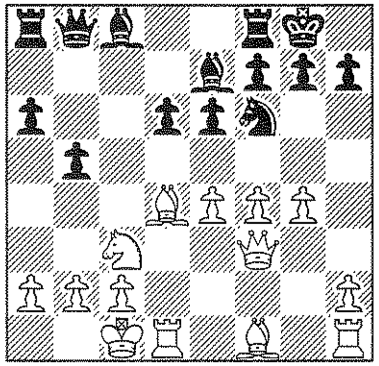
9 0-0-0 ♕c7



10 ♘db5

There is more venom in 10 g4! ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 (11 ♖xd4?! e5 12 ♖c4 ♗xg4!) 11...e5 12 fxe5 dxe5 13 ♕g3!, for example: 13...♗d6 14 ♗e3!, or 13...♘xg4 14 ♘d5! with some initiative (Sax-Kasparov, Niksic 1983), therefore Black should consider 13...♕a5!? 14 ♗xe5 ♗e6 with double-edged play (Timman-Salov, Wijk aan Zee 1997).

10...♕b8 11 g4 a6 12 ♘d4 ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4



13...b5!?

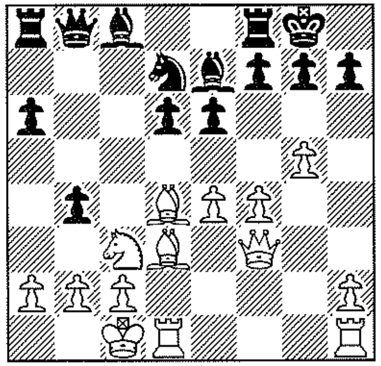
'A very important moment. It appeared to me that after this White's attack would develop more quickly and that essential was 13...e5! 14 g5 ♗g4 15 ♕g3 exd4 (15...♗xd1? loses to 16 gxf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘d5 etc.) 16 gxf6

(16 ♖xd4 ♗e6 17 f5 is refuted by the elegant 17...♘xe4! 18 ♖xe4 d5! – G.K.) 16...dxc3 17 fxe7 cxb2+ 18 ♔b1 ♗xd1 with quite good chances of a successful defence, since the position is greatly simplified.' (Tal)

This is indeed the safest way to equalise: after 19 exf8♕+ ♕xf8 20 ♖g1 (20 ♗c4 ♗h5 21 ♕h3 g6) 20...g6! 21 ♕d2 ♗h5 22 ♕d5! ♕h6! and 23...♖f8 White can count on no more than restoring material equality.

14 g5 ♘d7 15 ♗d3 (15 a3 is unfavourable in view of 15...b4 16 axb4 ♕xb4 17 ♕h5 ♘c5! 18 ♖g1 ♖b8 19 b3 ♗b7!) **15...b4**

If 15...♗b7?!, then 16 ♕h3! is strong.



Now after the quiet 16 ♘e2 e5 (or 16...a5) 17 ♗e3 exf4 and ...♘e5 Black has no reason for complaint.

16 ♘d5?!

An extremely risky and, apparently, even a losing move. 'The auditorium went still: what was this – ultra-boldness, recklessness? No one found an answer to these questions, it was simply not possible. The sacrifice provoked numerous arguments, whole forests of variations... At any event, Tal's boldness in such an important game is a unique phenomenon in the praxis of leading grandmasters!' (Koblents)

I would place this sacrifice higher than 16 ♖xe6+ in the preceding game with Portisch. There it was possible to work things out at the board, whereas here it proved possible to find a refutation only by the year 2000. And even today it is not altogether clear whether a grandmaster of Larsen's standard – say, Leko – would be able to solve the resulting problems. Blows such as 16 ♘d5?! are periodically landed by Shirov, and with him this usually works! In short, in this game, for the umpteenth time, Tal posed problems that were ahead of their time in complexity.

16...exd5 17 exd5

The two mighty bishops are trained on the most vulnerable points, and if White should succeed in including his heavy artillery in the attack, he will win quickly. Besides, to avoid the typical 'Lasker' sacrifice (17...♘c5? 18 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 19 ♕h5+ ♔g8 20 ♗xg7!) Black must immediately erect a barrier in the path of the d3-bishop.

17...f5?!

The wrong pawn! Instinctively one is drawn into making this move, but only 17...g6! could have cast doubts on White's bold conception, as is confirmed by the all-seeing machine:

1) 18 ♕h3?! ♘f6! 19 ♕h6 ♘h5 20 ♗e2 (20 f5 ♗xf5! 21 ♗xf5 ♖e8 and wins – Burgess) 20...♖e8 21 ♗xh5 ♗f8! and wins;

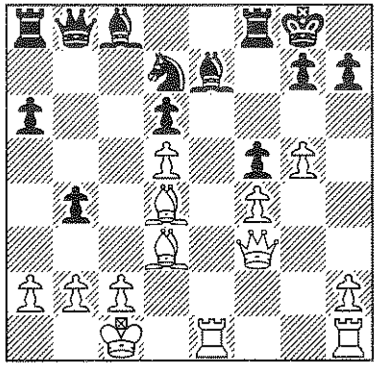
2) 18 h4?! ♘c5 19 h5 ♘xd3+ 20 ♖xd3 ♗f5 21 hxg6 fxg6! 22 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 23 ♖e3 ♕d8! (23...♖a7!? – Dvoretsky; this is simpler than 23...♕c7 24 ♕e2 ♖a7! 25 ♗xa7 ♗d8! 26 ♗d4 ♔g8 27 ♕h2 ♕h7) 24 ♕e2 ♗xg5 25 fxg5 ♕xg5 and wins;

3) 18 ♖de1! (the most menacing) 18...♗d8 19 ♕h3 ♘e5! (but not 19...♗b6? 20 ♗xg6! fxg6 21 ♖e7) 20 ♕h6 ♗b6! 21 fxe5 (21 ♗xb6? ♘xd3+ 22 cxd3 ♕xb6 23 h4 ♗g4) 21...♗xd4 22 ♖e4! ♗f2! (22...♕a7 23 ♖h4 f5 24 exf6 ♗e3+ 25 ♔b1 ♖xf6! 26 ♖e1 ♗f5 27 ♖xe3 ♖f7 28 ♖e1 ♕f2, and in this variation by Burgess Black has the advantage: 29 ♖c1 ♗xd3 30 cxd3 ♕d2 31 ♖h3 ♖e8 32 ♕h4 a5) 23 e6 (23 ♖f1?! ♕a7 24 e6 fxe6 25 dxe6 ♗b7 26 ♖xb4 ♖ae8 and wins) 23...fxe6 24 dxe6. Here Black can play for a win in two ways: 24...♗b7 25 e7 ♗xe4 (25...♖e8? 26 ♖e6!) 26 exf8♕+ ♕xf8 27 ♕xf8+ ♖xf8 28 ♗xe4 ♗e3+ 29 ♔d1 ♗xg5 with an extra pawn, or 24...d5 25 ♖e2 (25 e7? ♖e8 26 ♖e2 ♕b6 and wins) 25...♕a7 26 ♗xg6 (what else?) 26...hxg6 27 ♕xg6+ ♕g7 28 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 29 e7 ♖e8 30 ♖xf2 ♖xe7 with a technically won game.

After missing this far from obvious chance, Larsen also stumbles on the next move, and as a result he suffers a catastrophe.

18 ♖de1!

18 ♕e3!? was interesting, although hardly any better.



18...♖f7?

18...♗d8! was essential. In my monograph on the Sicilian Scheveningen (1984) written with Alexander Nikitin, it is indicated that after this 'the combination 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♕h5! is decisive, when against the threat of 21 ♕h6+ ♔g8 22 g6 no satisfactory defence is apparent.' Or 20...♔g8? 21 g6! ♘f6 22 ♕h6 and wins.

But to a computer from the early 21st century everything is apparent! After 20...♖g8! 21 ♗xf5 ♘f8 it is hard for White to find sufficient compensation for his material deficit, for example: 22 ♗d3 (22 ♗e6 with the idea of f4-f5 is hardly any better) 22...♔h8 23 ♖e8 ♕c7 24 g6 (but not 24 ♕h6? ♗f5! 25 ♗xf5 ♗xg5! and wins) 24...♘xg6 25 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 26 ♗xg6 ♕g7 27 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 28 ♖e1 ♗d7 29 ♗f5 ♗b5 with advantage to Black.

After 18...♗d8! Tal gives 'the very curious variation 19 ♕h5 ♘c5 20 ♗xg7! ♘xd3+ 21 ♔b1! (not 21 cxd3? ♕c7+) 21...♘xe1 (21...♘xf4 22 ♕h6) 22 g6 ♔xg7 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f6 24 g7 ♖f7 (*?? – but 24...♖e8 25 ♕h4+ ♔f7 26 ♕h5+ ♔f6 27 ♕xe8 also does not help – G.K.*) 25 g8♘ mate!' And 21...♔xg7? 22 ♕h6+ ♔g8 23 g6 ♕c7 24 ♖hg1 is also bad for Black.

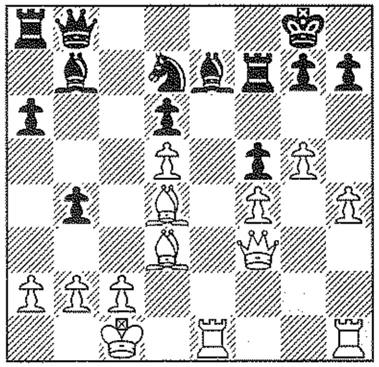
However, the machine quickly finds 21...♕c7! 22 ♗xf8 ♘xe1 23 ♖xe1 ♕f7 24 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♗xd6 a5 and Black's chances in the ending are at least equal.

19 h4!

It is probable that the attack is already decisive. 19 ♗xf5?! is too hasty after 19...♘f8 20 ♗xh7+? (20 ♗e6) 20...♔xh7 21 g6+ ♘xg6 22 ♕h5+ ♔g8 23 ♕xg6 ♗f5, when White's hopes are dashed.

19...♗b7

If 19...♘c5, then 20 h5 ♘xd3+ 21 ♕xd3 ♗f8 22 g6 ♖c7 23 h6!! with a spectacular rout, for example: 23...gxh6 24 gxh7+ ♔xh7 25 ♖e8 ♗g7 26 ♕g3 ♕b7 27 ♖xh6+! Nevertheless, 19...♘f8 was better, after which there would have followed 20 h5 and g5-g6. Apparently this turn of affairs came as a surprise to Larsen.



20 ♗xf5

'This can be attributed to competitive considerations. Had this position not been reached in the last game of the match, I would have played more sharply: 20 g6 hxg6 21 h5 g5 22 ♗xf5! with very dangerous threats. For example, 22...♖xf5? 23 ♖xe7 ♘e5 24 h6! ♘xf3 (*or 24...♖f7 25 ♖xf7 ♘xf3 26 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 27 ♗f6 ♕f8 28 ♖f7+ ♔g8 29 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 30 h7 ♔f7 31 fxg5 – G.K.*) 25 h7+ ♔f8 26

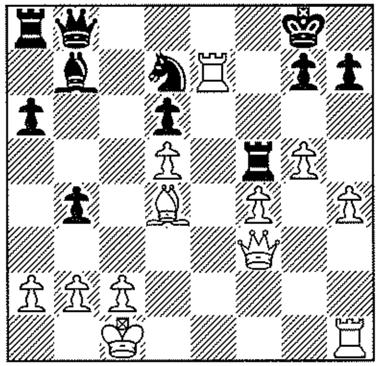
♖xg7 with inevitable mate. But I wanted to make absolutely sure, and at the board I was unable to find a forced win after 22...♗f6 23 ♗e6 (*Dvoretsky also analyses 23 fxg5!? – G.K*) 23...♕f8! (not 23...♗xd4? 24 fxg5 ♕f8 25 g6), and I decided, to avoid getting into time-trouble, not to spend time on the calculation of long and complicated variations.' (Tal)

But today a program such as Hiarcs, Fritz or Junior quickly finds the winning 24 ♗xf6 g4 25 ♕xg4 ♘xf6 26 ♕g5 ♔h8 27 ♗xf7 ♕xf7 28 h6 g6 29 f5! gxf5 30 ♕g7+! ♕xg7 31 hxg7+ ♔xg7 32 ♖e7+. Little is changed by 29...♘h7 30 ♕xg6 ♗xd5 (Burgess) 31 ♖h4 a5 32 ♖d4 and wins.

20...♖xf5

20...♘f8 again came into consideration, although after 21 ♕e4 Black faces difficult problems: 21...g6 22 ♗g4 ♗c8 23 h5 ♗f5 24 ♗xf5 gxf5 25 ♕g2, or 21...♕c7 22 h5 ♗d8 23 g6 hxg6 24 ♗e6! ♘xe6 25 hxg6 ♘f8 26 ♖e2! with the murderous threat of ♖eh2.

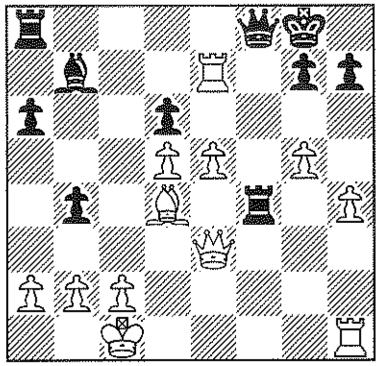
21 ♖xe7



21...♘e5

An attempt to change the course of the play with the help of tactical trickery. After the passive 21...♖f7 Black would have been crushed: 22 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 23 g6+! hxg6 24 h5 ♕g8 (24...♘f6 25 hxg6+ etc.) 25 ♕e4 ♔f8 26 hxg6.

22 ♕e4 ♕f8! (22...♖f7? 23 ♖xf7 ♘xf7 24 g6 hxg6 25 ♕xg6 ♕f8 26 ♖g1 and wins) **23 fxe5 ♖f4** (if 23...♕xe7 24 ♕xf5 ♗xd5 there can follow 25 ♖f1 dxe5 26 ♗xe5) **24 ♕e3**



24...♖f3?

Time-trouble! 24...♗xd5 is more tenacious, although after 25 exd6 ♖xd4 (25...♗xh1?! 26 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 27 ♗xg7 ♖f1+ 28 ♔d2 ♔xg7 29 d7 ♖ff8 30 h5! ♔f7 31 ♕e5 ♖ad8 32 ♕f6+) 26 ♕xd4! ♗xh1 27 b3! ♗f3 (27...♖e8? 28 ♕xg7+! – Burgess) 28 ♕c4+ ♔h8 29 ♖f7 ♕xd6 30 ♖xf3 White should be able to convert his extra pawn.

25 ♕e2 ♕xe7 (neither 25...♗xd5 26 exd6 nor 25...♕f4+ 26 ♕d2 ♖f1+ 27 ♖xf1 ♕xf1+ 28 ♕d1 was any better) **26 ♕xf3 dxe5 27 ♖e1 ♖d8**

Black also loses after 27...♖f8 28 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 29 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 30 ♗xe5 ♗xd5 31 ♗d6+ ♔f7 32 ♗xb4.

28 ♖xe5 ♕d6 29 ♕f4! ♖f8 (29...♗xd5? 30 ♖e8+!) **30 ♕e4 b3 31 axb3 ♖f1+ 32 ♔d2 ♕b4+ 33 c3 ♕d6 34 ♗c5!?**

'Not altogether necessary, but an amusing concluding combination.' (Tal)

34...♕xc5 35 ♖e8+ ♖f8 36 ♕e6+ ♔h8 37 ♕f7! 1-0

Thus Tal after all wrested victory in the match and qualified for the final, where he met the now exceptionally strong Boris Spassky. I will describe this duel in the chapter on the 10th champion, but here I will limit myself to a comment by the most interested spectator – the current world champion Petrosian: 'Let it not sound paradoxical if I say that Tal had already lost to Spassky during his match with Larsen. In that match Tal was Tal only in the 10th game...'

After remaining the 'odd one out', Mikhail Nekhemevich was again not depressed for long and soon he continued his successful performances in tournaments, every now and then delighting chess fans with his stunning combinations.

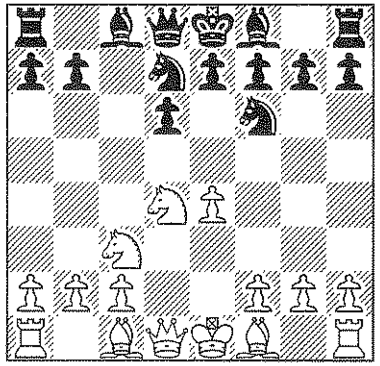
Game 139

M.Tal-M.Taimanov

Kislovodsk 1966

Sicilian Defence B56

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 (Mark Evgenevich would have done better to choose his favourite Paulsen Variation) **3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘bd7?!**



6 ♗c4!

This is the most energetic move of those tried at that time against Taimanov (6 g3, 6 ♗e3 or 6 ♗e2).

6...♕c7 (6...♘b6 7 ♗b3 e5 8 ♘de2 ♗e6 9 ♗g5 is insufficient, while 6...g6 7 f3 and 8 ♗e3 leads to an inferior version of the Dragon) **7 ♕e2 a6 8 ♗g5 b5** (8...e6 9 0-0-0 and ♖he1) **9 ♗d5! ♘xd5**

Perhaps 9...♗b7 would have been better.

10 ♘xd5 ♕b7 11 0-0-0 (White has a clear initiative, and in the hands of Tal this is a lethal weapon) **11...e6 12 f4!** (not even thinking of retreating!) **12...♘c5** (12...exd5? 13 exd5+) **13 ♖he1 ♖a7**

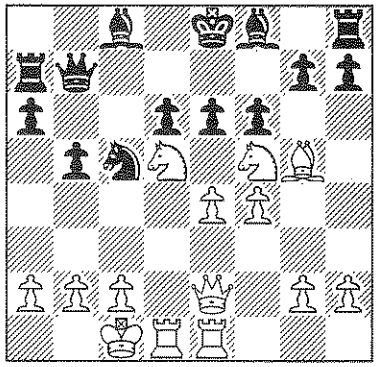
13...h6 14 ♗h4 ♖g8 15 f5 e5 16 ♘f3 also holds little joy, while otherwise Black is quickly crushed: 13...exd5? 14 exd5+ ♔d7 15 ♕e8+ ♔c7 16 ♗d8+ ♔b8 17 ♘c6+, or 13...♗d7 14 ♘f5! h6 15 ♗f6! ♖g8 (15...gxf6 16 ♘xf6+ ♔d8 17 ♘xd6 etc.) 16 ♗e7! exd5 (Black is not saved by either 16...exf5 17 exf5 ♗e6 18 fxe6 ♗xe7 19 exf7+, or 16...♗xe7 17 ♘dxe7 exf5 18 exf5) 17 ♘xd6+ ♔xe7 18 ♘xb7.

14 ♘f5! (another 'large log' on the bonfire of the attack!) **14...f6?!**

This leads to the destruction of Black's defences. It was also dangerous to play 14...exf5?! (14...exd5? 15 exd5+ ♔d7 16 ♕e7+!) 15 exf5+ ♘e6 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 f5 etc.

Perhaps the only chance of continuing the resistance was 14...♕b8, to which White could have replied with the spectacular manoeuvre 15 ♗f6! ♖g8 (15...gxf6? 16 ♘xf6+ ♔d8 17 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 18 e5 ♘d7 19 ♖xd6 ♔e7 20 ♕g4 ♔f8 21 ♖ed1 is bad) 16 ♗d4 or 16 ♗h4, retaining all the advantages of his position.

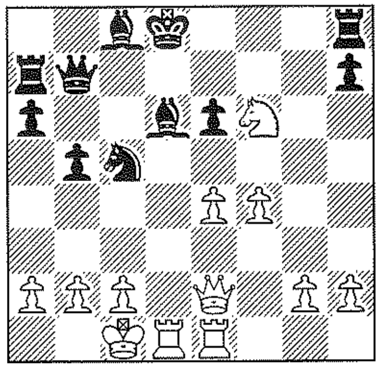
But now an amazingly picturesque position has arisen: White simultaneously has three pieces en prise and... a very strong attack!



15 ♗xf6! gxf6

It is easy to see that there is nothing better: 15...exf5? 16 exf5+ ♘e6 17 ♗h4; 15...♔f7?! 16 ♗xg7!; 15...exd5?! 16 exd5+ ♔f7 (16...♔d7? 17 ♗xg7) 17 ♗xg7 ♗xf5 (17...♗xg7? 18 ♘xd6+) 18 ♗xh8 and Black is in trouble.

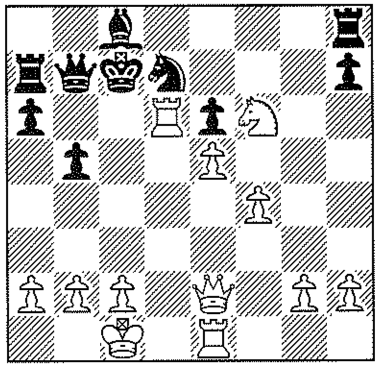
16 ♘xf6+ ♔d8 (but not 16...♔f7? 17 ♕h5+! ♔xf6 18 e5+ dxe5 19 fxe5 mate) **17 ♘xd6 ♗xd6**



18 e5! ♘d7

It is hardly any better to play 18...♔e7 19 exd6+ or 18... ♔c7 19 exd6+ ♔b8 20 d7 (20 ♕e5!?) 20...♗xd7 21 ♕e5+ ♕c7 22 ♘xd7+ etc.

19 ♖xd6 ♔c7 (if 19...♔e7, then 20 ♕g4 ♘xf6 21 ♕g7+)



20 ♖ed1?!

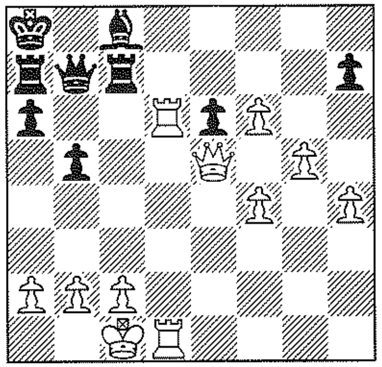
After this blemish the struggle becomes sharper. Tal pointed out the decisive 20 ♕e3! ♘xf6 21 exf6 ♔xd6 22 ♖d1+ ♔c6 23 ♕e4+ ♔b6 24 ♕d4+ ♔a5 25 b4+ ♔a4 26 ♕c3 followed by the unavoidable ♕b3 mate.

20...♘xf6 (if 20...♘b6, then 21 ♕e3! ♘c4? 22 ♖d7+) **21 exf6 ♔b8 22 ♕e5** (22 g4!?) **22...♔a8 23 g4 ♖f8**

The other chances were 23...h6!? and 23...♖g8!? 24 g5 ♕g2 25 h4 ♕f2.

24 g5 ♖f7 25 h4 (25 ♖d8 ♕c6 26 ♕d6 was also good) **25...♖c7**

25...♕g2 was perhaps more cunning, hoping for 26 ♖xe6?! ♖ac7! 27 ♕e4+ ♕xe4 28 ♖xe4 ♗f5. At any event, the phalanx of white pawns on the kingside is highly dangerous.



26 ♖d8 ♕c6

If 26...♕g2, then 27 c3 looks good, since if 27...b4 White has 28 ♕xe6! ♔b7 (28...♔b8 29 f7 bxc3 30 ♖xc8+) 29 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 30 f7 ♕c6 31 ♖d7+ ♔b6 32 ♖d6 and wins.

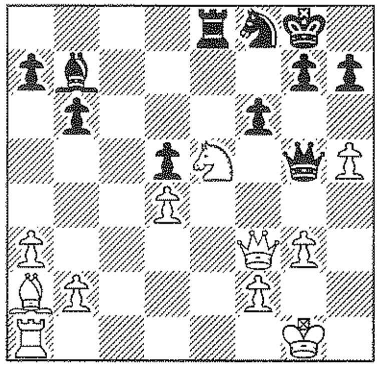
27 ♕e2 ♕c5

Black is not helped by either 27...♕c4 28 ♕xc4 ♖xc4 29 h5 ♖ac7 30 g6 hxg6 31 hxg6 ♖xc2+ 32 ♔b1 ♖g2 33 f7 ♖cc2 34 ♖8d2!; 27...♖d7 28 ♖1xd7 ♖xd7 29 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 (29...♗xd7 30 f7) 30 h5, or 27...♔b7 28 h5!? e5 29 ♖8d6! ♗g4 30 ♖xc6 ♗xe2 31 ♖xc7+ ♔xc7 32 g6! ♖a8 33 g7 ♗xh5 34 fxe5 ♗f7 35 ♖d6 etc.

28 ♕e4+ ♔b8 (or 28...♖ab7 29 h5 ♔a7 30 g6) **29 h5 e5** (29...♕f5 30 ♕xf5 exf5 31 g6) **30 g6 hxg6 31 hxg6 exf4 32 g7 ♖xg7 33 fxg7 ♖xg7 34 ♕xf4+** and White soon emerged victorious.

In the next Olympiad (Havana 1966) Tal, playing on board three, again achieved the overall best score – 12 out of 13! The greatest pleasure to the public, and to the performer himself, was afforded by the following lesson in chess geometry.

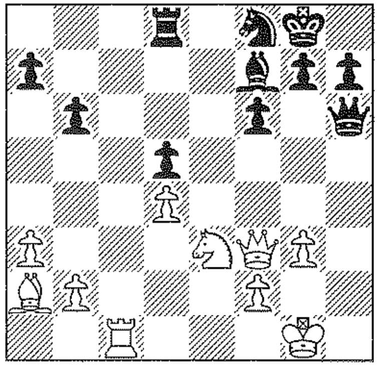
Game 140
M.Tal-B.Brinck-Claussen
Havana Olympiad 1966



26 ♘c4!

With the threat of ♘d6. 26 ♘g4 ♘e6 was weaker, and 26 ♗xd5+? ♗xd5 27 ♕xd5+ ♖e6! 28 ♕d8 ♕xh5 was altogether unfavourable.

26...♖d8 27 ♖e1! (and now ♖e7 is threatened) **27...♗c8** (27...h6!?) **28 ♘e3 ♗e6 29 ♖c1!** (White does not begrudge the h5-pawn – it is more important to invade on the seventh rank!) **29...♗f7 30 h6! ♕xh6**



31 ♖c7

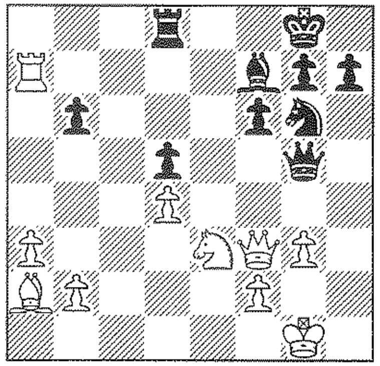
Threatening 32 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 33 ♗xd5+.

31...♕g5

If 31...♘e6!? there could have followed 32 ♖xa7 ♘xd4 33 ♕d1 ♘c6 34 ♖b7 (34 ♖xf7?! ♔xf7 35 ♗xd5+ ♔f8 36 ♕b3 ♘e7 37 ♕xb6 ♖c8 is unclear) 34...♕g5 35 ♖xb6.

32 ♖xa7 ♘g6?

But this is the decisive mistake. At the very least 32...h5 or 32...♗e6 would have been better.



33 ♘xd5!! ♗xd5 (if 33...♖xd5, then 34 ♖xf7!) **34 ♖a8!**

'The key to the combination.' (Tal)

34...♗xa2 (not 34...♕c1+ 35 ♔g2 ♗xa2 36 ♖xd8+ ♔f7 on account of 37 ♕b7+ ♘e7 38 ♖d7) **35 ♖xd8+ ♔f7** (35...♘f8 36 ♕a8!) **36 ♕c6!**

Here 36 ♕b7+? ♘e7 37 ♖d7 is a false trail in view of 37...f5 38 d5 ♕c1+! 39 ♔h2 ♕c5! (but not 39...♕h6+? 40 ♔g2) 40 ♔h3 ♔f6! with equal chances. Tal thought that 38...♔e8 would be good enough for a draw – 39 d6 ♕c1+ 40 ♔h2 (40 ♔g2?? ♗d5+!) 40...♕h6+, but after this 39 ♕c7! wins.

36...♘e7 37 ♕e8+ ♔e6 38 ♖c8! (threatening ♖c6+) **38...♕d5 39 ♖c3 ♕d7 40 ♖e3+ ♔d6 41 ♕b8+ ♔c6 42 a4**

The sealed move. 42 ♖c3+ ♔d5 43 ♕xb6 ♔e4 44 f3+ ♔f5 45 ♖c7 ♕e8 46 ♕c5+ would also have been decisive.

42...♘d5 43 ♖e1 ♕d6 (or 43...♘b4 44 d5+! ♕xd5 45 ♖c1+ ♗c4 46 ♕c8+) **44 ♖c1+ ♔d7 45 ♕c8+ 1-0**

Incidentally, Tal missed the first four rounds at that Olympiad on account of a terrible 'tactical blow'... by a bottle to the head during a dance in some night club, where he and Korchnoi (truly to their own misfortune!) had risked violating the competitive regime, by secretly escaping from the Soviet team's camp. He later played with his head bandaged, but the scar on his forehead remained with him all his life. 'Only with Tal's iron constitution was it possible to endure such a blow,' joked Petrosian.

'The authorities never forgave us for that night,' Korchnoi bitterly remembers. 'Neither me, nor Tal. Soon it became chronically difficult for him to travel abroad. Especially in the early 1970s, when he married for the third time and came under the strictest control. Things became completely bad for him, and in order to save his active chess career, he sold his soul – he went into Karpov's service.' However, after Merano 1981, when the time came for Karpov to battle with me, Tal stood aside.

But before this there were numerous events: in 1967 – victory (together with Polugayevsky) in the 35th USSR Championship; in 1968 – a win in the Candidates quarter-final match against Gligoric (5½-3½), a loss in the semi-final to Korchnoi (4½-5½) and a humiliating exclusion from the USSR team directly before the flight to the Olympiad in Lugano: 'You, Mikhail Nekhemevich, can return to Riga. Smyslov is already in Lugano, and he will replace you'; in 1969 – failures in the 36th USSR Championship, in a 'consolation' match with Larsen for a place in the Interzonal (2½-5½) and in the 37th USSR Championship (which was also a Zonal). The latter resembled Curaçao...

The cause of the slump was the same as before: a sharp worsening of his kidney illness. Tal suffered severe attacks for many months, and the doctors had to inject him with morphine. But for all the burdens of life, Mikhail Nekhemevich did not lose his sense of humour. When a fan once asked him: 'Is it true that you are a morphinist? – he instantly replied: 'What do you mean, I'm a Chigorinist!'

In fact Tal admired both Morphy, and Chigorin. And, as though developing their ideas, he stated: 'Many sacrifices do not require any concrete calculation at all. A glance at the resulting position is sufficient to realise that the sacrifice is correct.' Genna Sosonko, who was then his second, recalls: 'Variations – and, of course, we analysed only openings – were not especially necessary for him. The most important thing for him (and here I completely agree with Spassky) was to create a situation on the board, such that his pieces came alive, and for him, as for no one else, they did indeed come alive. The most important thing for him was to create tension and to seize the initiative, to create a position such that the spiritual factor – that of giving mate – would prevail over and even laugh at material values.'

In the end he realised that 'to go on living and playing chess like that was impossible,' and in November 1969 he decided to have an operation to remove the diseased kidney. He began to feel better and his success curve again took an upward turn.

In the spring of 1970 he played on board nine in the 'match of the century': USSR against the rest of the world (2-2 against Najdorf). Then he performed splendidly in the European Team Championship (5 out of 6) and in the tournament 'grandmasters against young masters' (10½ out of 14). And then... he suffered another humiliation: the Soviet Chess Federation did not allow Tal, ex-world champion and three times national champion, to participate in the 38th USSR Championship, which took place in his native Riga!

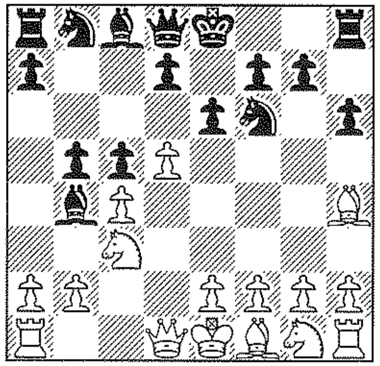
Record Series

Whereas in the 1960s the standard of reliability was Petrosian – in 68 games on the way to his match with Botvinnik he suffered only one defeat – in the 1970s some amazing records for impregnability were established by Tal. First he produced an unbeaten series of 83 games, taking five successive first places: Sukhumi 1972, the Olympiad in Skopje (14 out of 16 on board four – the overall best score!), the 40th USSR Championship (Baku 1972), Wijk aan Zee 1973 and Tallinn 1973.

In the last of these tournaments he brilliantly conducted a crucial encounter with the 'newly' ex-world champion Spassky, thus beginning to improve the catastrophic balance of their individual meetings (and in the end he reduced it to +6 -9 =24).

Game 141
B.Spassky-M.Tal
Tallinn 1973
Nimzo-Indian Defence E30

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♗g5 h6 5 ♗h4 c5 6 d5 b5!?



This is the most energetic rejoinder to the Leningrad Variation.

7 dxe6

A risky venture from the Zak-Tolush arsenal: White accepts the gift, but concedes the centre. White has no advantage after 7 e4 g5 8 ♗g3 ♘xe4 9 ♗e5 0-0! (Levenfish-Estrin, Baku 1951). But 7 e3! as played by Timman against Ligterink (Wijk aan Zee 1977) and Yusupov (Hilversum 6th matchgame 1986) casts doubt on Black's sharp move.

7...fxe6 8 cxb5 d5!

Not 8...♕a5? which is met by the reply 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 ♕c2 ♔f7 11 e3 a6 12 ♗d3 ♗b7 13 ♘e2 axb5 14 0-0 ♖g8 15 ♗e4 ♗c6 16 ♖ad1 with advantage to White (Spassky-Posner, Vancouver 1971).

9 e3 0-0 10 ♘f3?!

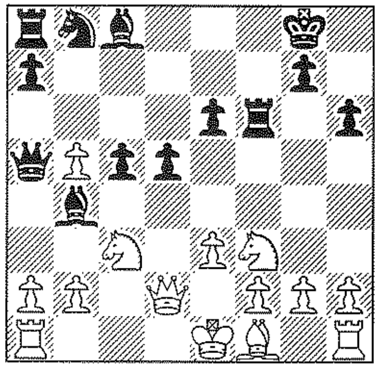
Tal had prepared a dangerous novelty against this. A few months later the 10th world champion tried 10 ♗d3 (10 a3!?) 10...d4 (10...a6!?) 11 exd4 cxd4 12 a3 ♗a5 13 b4 dxc3 14 bxa5 ♗b7 15 ♘f3 (later 15 ♘e2!? was played) 15...♕xa5 16 0-0 ♘bd7 17 ♕e2 (17 ♘d4!?) 17...♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♘e5 19 ♕e2 ♘xd3 20 ♕xd3 ♘d5 with equality (Spassky-Unzicker, Bath 1973).

10...♕a5!

Now this is just the right time! 10...♘bd7? 11 ♗d3 e5? 12 ♗f5! e4 13 ♗e6+ ♔h8 14 ♗xd5 is thoroughly bad (Spassky-Liebert, Sochi 1967).

11 ♗xf6 (...♘e4 was threatened) **11...♖xf6 12 ♕d2**

If 12 ♕c1 (with the idea of a2-a3) both 12...c4 (Tal) and 12...a6 13 bxa6 ♗xa6 14 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 are possible. Also none too favourable is 12 ♖c1 ♕xa2 13 ♖c2 a6 14 ♘e5! axb5! 15 ♗xb5 (15 ♘d3?! ♕a5 16 ♘xb4 ♕xb4 is weaker) 15...♕a5 16 ♗e2 ♗b7 17 0-0 ♘c6.

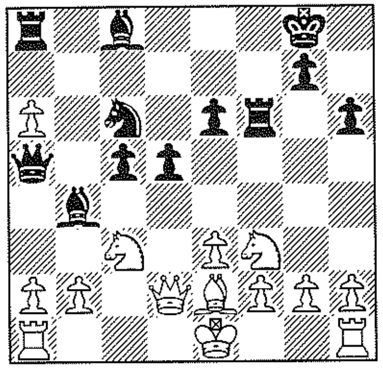


12...a6! 13 bxa6?!

A more cautious way to play is 13 ♗e2 (better than 13 b6 ♘d7 14 a3 ♗xc3 15 ♕xc3 ♕xb6) 13...axb5 14 0-0 ♘c6 15 a3 ♗xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 17 bxc3 ♖a5 18 ♖fb1 ♗a6 19 ♘d2 c4 20 ♗d1 e5 21 a4 with equality.

13...♘c6! (intensifying the threat of ...d5-d4) **14 ♗e2?**

Now it was simply essential to play 14 ♕c1 (or 14 a3 d4 15 ♕c1!) 14...d4 (14...♗xa6 15 a3) 15 a3 ♗xc3+ 16 bxc3, for example: 16...dxc3 17 ♗e2 ♗xa6 18 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 19 0-0 with approximate equality, or 16...♖xf3!? 17 gxf3 ♘e5 18 f4 ♘f3+ 19 ♔e2 ♘h4 20 c4 e5 21 f3 ♕xa6 22 ♔f2 ♕f6 with quite good compensation for the exchange.



14...d4! 15 exd4 ♖xf3!

'This combination leads by force to an advantage for Black.' (Tal) 15...cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 (16...♗c5!?) 17 ♕xd4 ♗c5 18 ♕a4! is by no means so clear.

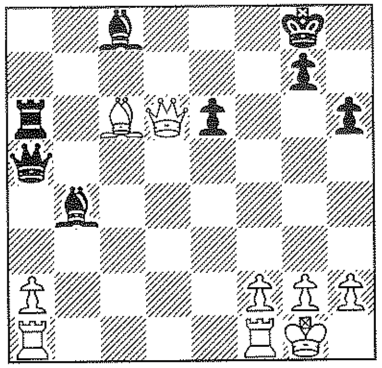
16 ♗xf3 cxd4 17 0-0!

If 17 ♖c1 Black wins by 17...♗xa6!! 18 ♗xc6 ♖d8! 19 ♕c2 dxc3 20 bxc3 ♕e5+ 21 ♗e4 ♗d3! But at the board the eighth champion was also hoping for 21...♗xc3+ 22 ♕xc3 ♕xe4+ 23 ♕e3 ♕xg2 24 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 25 ♕c6 ♕xc6 26 ♖xc6 ♗b7! with the spectacular finish 27 ♖xh6+ gxh6 28 ♖g1 (28 0-0 ♖g8 mate) 28...♗f3 and ...♖d1 mate.

17...dxc3 18 bxc3 ♗xc3 19 ♕d6 ♖xa6! (but not 19...♗xa1? 20 ♕xc6) **20 ♗xc6** (20 ♖ad1 ♘d4 and 20 ♖ac1 ♘e5 21 ♕d1 ♗d7 are both unsuitable)

20...♗b4!

'The concluding move of the combination. White loses his bishop at c6.' (Tal) 20...♗xa1 (20...♗e5? 21 ♕c7! ♖xc6 22 ♕e8+) was insufficient after 21 ♖xa1 ♕b6 (21...♕c3? 22 ♕d8+ ♔h7 23 ♗e4+) 22 ♖c1 ♖xa2 23 ♕f4 with equality (but not 23 ♕g3? ♕xc6!).



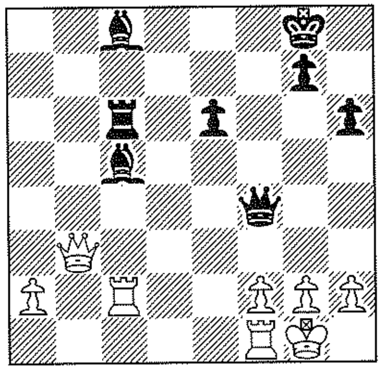
21 ♕b8 ♖xc6 22 ♖ac1 ♗c5 23 ♖c2

'Spassky tries to create pressure down the c-file, but it turns out that there is an Achilles' heel in his position – the f2-square. Possibly White should have looked for chances after 23 ♖cd1.' (Tal) Only not 23 ♖fd1? ♗xf2+! 24 ♔h1 (24 ♔xf2? ♖xc1 25 ♖xc1 ♕d2+) 24...♗c5 etc.

23...♕a4! 24 ♕b3 (24 ♖fc1? ♗xf2+!)

24...♕f4!

Tal rejected 24...♕e4!? because of 25 ♖fc1 ♗b7 26 ♕xb7 ♗xf2+ 27 ♔f1! (27 ♔h1? ♖xc2) 27...♕d3+ 28 ♔xf2 ♖xc2+ 29 ♖xc2 ♕xc2+, when 'the resulting queen ending with an extra pawn for Black is an extremely minor achievement.'



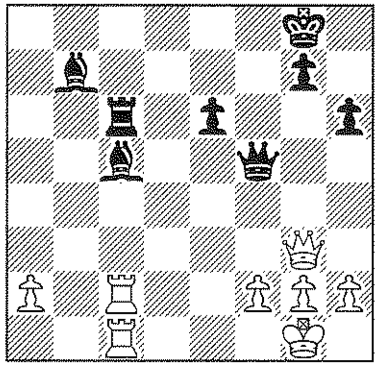
25 ♕g3

After switching on the computer, I spent a long time trying to refute Black's idea, but without success. 25 g3?! is weak due to 25...♕e4 26 ♖fc1 ♗b7! 27 ♕xb7 ♗xf2+! (to say nothing of 25 ♖fc1? ♗xf2+! 26 ♔h1 ♕xc1+!). I agree with Tal, that 25 ♕b5 ♕d6 26 ♖fc1 is unfavourable in view of 26...♗a6! 27 ♕b3 (27 ♕a5? ♗xf2+) 27...♖b6, while after 25 ♕f3!? Black should not allow 25...♕xf3 26 gxf3 e5 27 ♔h1 (27 ♖b1!?) 27...♗b7 28 ♖b1 (28 ♖fc1? ♖g6!) 28...♖b6 29 ♖xb6 ♗xf3+ 30 ♔g1 ♗xb6 31 a4 ♔f7 32 a5! ♗xa5 33 ♖c5 ♗d2 34 ♖xe5 with drawing chances, but 25...♕c7! retains the advantage.

The machine parries the variation 25 ♖d1!? ♕f5 26 ♔h1 by 26...♗a6 27 ♖dc1 ♗d3 28 ♕b7 ♗xc2 29 ♕xc6 ♔h7 30 f3 ♕e5! and ...♕e3 with a very strong attack. An amusing position: both black bishops are 'hanging', but because of the mating threats they cannot be taken. They are mighty bishops: one (c5) assists the queen in the attack, while the other (c2) defends its own king and at the same time blocks the c-file to the rook! White has no checks and there is no way that he can exchange queens.

Thus after 14 ♗e2? and Tal's fine tactics (14...d4!, 15...♖xf3!, 20...♗b4!) White has an objectively difficult position.

25...♕f5! 26 ♖fc1 ♗b7!



27 ♕f3

'27 ♕b8+? ♔h7! (but not 27...♖c8? 28 ♕xc8+ ♗xc8 29 ♖xc5 when it is White who wins) 28 ♕xb7 was not possible on account of 28...♗xf2+!, but 27 h3 was more tenacious.' (Tal) Although then 27...♗d6! is strong, for example: 28 ♕b3 ♖xc2 29 ♕xc2 ♕f4 30 f3 ♕h2+ 31 ♔f2 ♗g3+ 32 ♔e3 ♗f4+, or 28 ♕g4 ♖xc2 29 ♖xc2 ♕e5! (more accurate than 29...♕xc2 30 ♕xe6+ ♔h7 31 ♕xd6 ♕xa2 32 f3) 30 f4 ♕e3+ 31 ♔h2 h5, in both cases with a lethal outcome for White.

27...♕g5 28 ♕b3?!

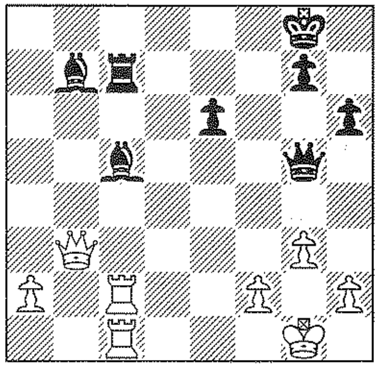
28 h3 (28 ♕g3? ♗xf2+! 29 ♔xf2 ♖xc2+ 30 ♖xc2 ♕f5+) 28...♖c7 29 ♕g4 was nevertheless preferable, although after 29...♕e5! 30 h4 (30 a4 h5!) 30...♗d6 31 ♖xc7 ♗xc7 32 ♕g3! ♕xg3 33 fxg3 ♗xg3 Black has an excellent endgame.

28...♖c7

28...♗xf2+? was pointless due to 29 ♔xf2 ♖xc2+ 30 ♖xc2 ♕xg2+ 31 ♔e3 ♕f3+ 32 ♔d2.

29 g3

'After 29 ♕xe6+ Black would have won by 29...♖f7 30 g3 ♗xf2+!, while if 29 ♕g3 – again 29...♗xf2+. The only move not to lose immediately was 29 ♕h3.' (Tal) Well, let's take a look: 29...♗xf2+! 30 ♔xf2 ♕f4+ 31 ♔g1 (31 ♔e2 ♗a6+) 31...♕d4+ 32 ♔f1 (32 ♔h1 ♖xc2) 32...♗a6+ 33 ♔e1 ♕g1+ 34 ♔d2 ♕f2+, or 31 ♔e1 ♕e4+! 32 ♔d1 ♗a6! 33 ♕f3 ♕d4+ 34 ♔e1 ♕g1+ 35 ♔d2 ♖d7+ 36 ♔c3 ♕d4+ 37 ♔b3 ♖b7+ and mate.



29...♗xf2+! 30 ♔xf2 ♕f6+?! (30...♕f5+! 31 ♔g1 ♕e4! would have won more quickly)

31 ♔e1

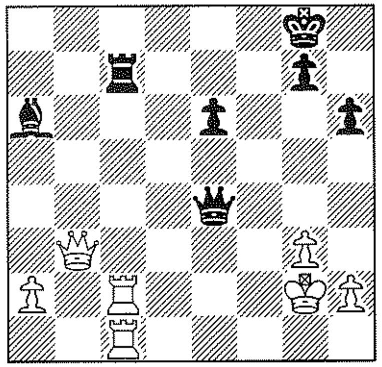
31 ♔e2 ♕e5+ and 31 ♔g1 ♕d4+ 32 ♔f1 ♖f7+ 33 ♔e1 ♕e4+ 34 ♖e2 ♕h7 35 ♔d2

♖d7+ were no better.

31...♕e5+ 32 ♔f1

Or 32 ♔d1 (32 ♔f2 ♖f7+ 33 ♔g1 ♕d4+) 32...♕d4+ 33 ♔e1 ♕e4+ 34 ♔d1 ♖d7+ 35 ♖d2 ♕h1+ 36 ♔e2 (36 ♔c2 ♖c7+) 36...♕g2+.

32...♗a6+? (32...♕f5+! was much simpler) **33 ♔g1 ♕d4+ 34 ♔g2 ♕e4+**



35 ♔g1?

An answering error in time-trouble. Some very pretty variations would have arisen after 35 ♔f2! (35 ♔h3? ♖xc2 36 ♕xc2 ♗f1+!) 35...♖f7+ 36 ♔g1 ♗d3! (36...♗b7 37 ♖c8+ ♗xc8 38 ♖xc8+ ♔h7 39 ♕c2 with a draw) 37 h4! (37 ♕c3 ♕e3+ 38 ♔g2 ♗e4+ 39 ♔h3 ♕g5 40 ♕c5 ♖f5 and wins) 37...♖f3! 38 ♔h2 ♗xc2 39 ♕xc2 ♕e3 40 ♕c8+ ♖f8 41 ♕c3 (41 ♕c4 ♖f2+ 42 ♔h3 ♕f3! 43 ♕xe6+ ♔h7 44 ♖g1 h5! 45 a4 ♖e2 46 ♕d7 ♕f2 47 ♕d3+ g6 is inferior) 41...♕e2+ 42 ♔g1 ♕xa2 with an extra pawn, which, however, still has to be converted.

35...♗b7 (with the threat of 35...♖f7) **36 h4 ♕h1+ 37 ♔f2 ♖f7+ 38 ♔e2 ♕e4+ 0-1**

In view of 39 ♔d1 (39 ♔d2 ♖d7+ 40 ♔c3 ♕d4 mate; 39 ♕e3 ♗a6+ 40 ♔d2 ♖d7+) 39...♖d7+ 40 ♖d2 ♕h1+ 41 ♔c2 ♗e4+. Tal's energy in this game is impressive! After all, this was no longer 1960, but 1973...

'Like millions of chess enthusiasts throughout the world,' wrote Botvinnik, 'I am pleased that my former opponent Mikhail Tal has again acquired his former strength, which he is demonstrating not only with victories in tournaments, but also by the high quality of his games.'

In chess circles they had already begun talking about a forthcoming match for the world crown between Fischer and Tal. In the words of Flohr, this would have been the most interesting match duet that could be imagined.

'Very many were interested,' writes Viktor Vasiliev, 'in how the present-day Tal would have performed against the earlier one. Grandmaster Balashov replied to this question diplomatically: "In my opinion, with White the previous Tal would have won, but with Black – the present-day one." Bronstein had no doubts: "The present-day Tal would have won." The correct reply to this somewhat academic question was given by life itself.'

Alas, in the next Interzonal tournament (Leningrad 1973) Tal suffered six defeats and scored only 50%, while victory was celebrated by Karpov and Korchnoi – the future opponents in the final Candidates match and two matches for the world championship...

Tal also performed insipidly in the 41st USSR Championship (Moscow 1973), but after losing to Petrosian on 23rd October he went undefeated through seven tournaments and 93 games. An absolute world record! And although on 16 October 1974 in Novi Sad this unique undefeated series came to an end, Tal concluded this fantastic year with victory in the 42nd USSR Championship (Leningrad 1974).

He also did not qualify for the Candidates event in the following cycle, sharing 2nd-4th places at the Interzonal in Biel (1976) and losing out in the additional match-tournament to Petrosian and Portisch.

A new ascent was aided by his close collaboration with the young world champion Anatoly Karpov, whom Tal helped in the matches in Baguio and Merano. In the 46th USSR Championship (Tbilisi 1978) he won his last, sixth gold medal as champion of the country (only Botvinnik, with seven, had more), and in the spring of 1979, together with Karpov, he scored a brilliant win in the double-cycle 'tournament of stars' in Montreal.

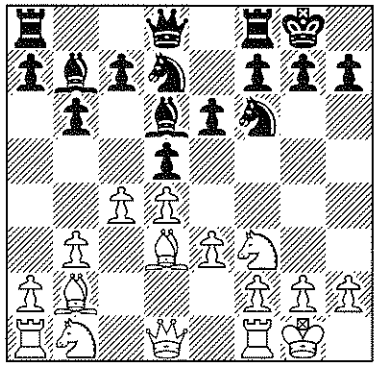
At the start of the Montreal tournament he again defeated Spassky, and the duel between the ex-world champions in the second cycle was therefore particularly fierce.

Game 142
B.Spassky-M.Tal
Montreal 1979, 10th round
Queen's Indian Defence E14

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 e3 ♗b7 5 ♗d3 d5 6 b3

'That day Boris was very aggressively inclined, and the variation chosen by him emphasised unequivocally his desire for a full-scale battle.' (Tal)

6...♗d6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♗b2 ♘bd7



9 ♘bd2

A more active alternative is 9 ♘c3 (9 ♘e5 c5!, Filip-Botvinnik, Varna Olympiad 1962) 9...a6 10 ♖c1 ♕e7 11 cxd5! exd5 12 ♘e2, or 9...c5 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♖c1 ♕e7 12 ♕e2 ♖ad8 13 ♖fd1 ♘e4 14 ♗a6 ♗a8 15 ♗b5 ♘df6 16 ♘e5 ♘xc3 17 ♗xc3 ♘e4 18 ♗b2 f6 19 ♘d3 ♔h8 20 ♘f4 with a slight initiative (Petrosian-Polugayevsky, Moscow 4th matchgame 1970).

9...♕e7 10 ♖c1 ♖ad8

After 10...♘e4 Tal did not like 11 ♕c2 f5 12 ♘e5, but now in the event of 11 ♕e2 he would have replied 11...♘e4.

11 ♕c2 c5 12 cxd5

In reply to 12 ♖fd1 (or 12 ♘e5) Black had prepared 12...cxd4 13 exd4 ♖c8: 'in such situations the loss of a tempo is not particularly significant.'

12...exd5 13 dxc5

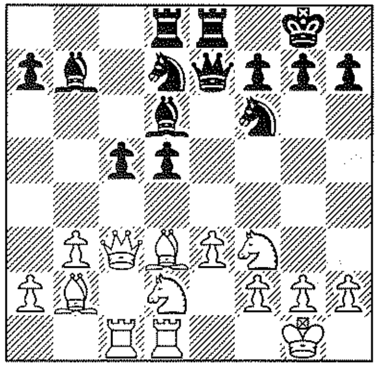
Transposing into a position with hanging pawns was perhaps a psychological mistake: for Tal a dynamic situation was always more pleasant! It is not surprising that he recommended 13 ♗b5 or 13 ♗f5.

13...bxc5 14 ♕c3!?

'And this is simply a challenge... When after the game I asked Spassky what induced him to make this move, he spread his hands: "A beggar isn't afraid of being robbed." The idea of the ...d5-d4 breakthrough becomes very real.' (Tal)

14...♖fe8 (now the entire black army is ready for battle) **15 ♖fd1**

'It would seem that Boris was betrayed by his sense of danger. I expected 15 ♖fe1 and I was intending to give serious consideration to 15...c4 – 16 bxc4 ♗b4 17 ♕c2 dxc4.' (Tal) And indeed, after 18 ♗xc4 ♗xf3 19 ♘xf3 (19 gxf3?! ♗xd2 20 ♕xd2 ♘e5 21 ♕e2 ♖d2!) 19...♗xe1 20 ♖xe1 ♖c8 21 ♕e2 White has a somewhat inferior position. But it is better for him to play 16 ♗f5! ♘c5 17 ♖ed1 with a double-edged game.



15...d4?!

A committal decision! 'Black's pieces are so ideally placed, that there is no point in delaying this breakthrough.' (Tal) From the practical and psychological viewpoint this is certainly a successful move (the later Spassky was lazy about calculating complicated and dangerous variations – to be more precise, he basically didn't want to calculate them), but from the purely chess viewpoint, as we will see, it is dubious.

16 exd4 cxd4 17 ♕a5?

Of course, 17 ♘xd4! was correct (but not 17 ♕xd4? ♘c5), after which Tal 'did not see any forced way of developing the attack and probably would have been unable to resist the temptation of sacrificing the bishop on h2.' However, computer analysis shows that the attack with 17...♗xh2+?! 18 ♔xh2 ♘g4+ would not have worked:

1) 19 ♔g3 ♕e5+ 20 f4 (but not 20 ♔xg4? ♘f6+ and mate) 20...♕e3+ 21 ♘4f3 ♘df6 22 ♗xh7+ 'and White is by no means doomed' (Tal); in fact after 22...♔xh7 23 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 24 ♘c4 he has the advantage, and therefore Black should play 21...♕f2+! 22 ♔h3 ♘df6 with sharp play: 23 ♖f1 ♖xd3 24 ♕xd3 ♘h5! (24...♗xf3 25 ♕xf3 ♕xd2 26 ♗xf6 is inadequate) 25 ♖xf2 ♘xf2+ 26 ♔h4 ♘xd3 27 ♔xh5 ♘xc1 28 ♗xc1 ♖e2;

2) 19 ♔g1! ♕h4 20 ♘2f3! (Tal gives only 20 ♘4f3? ♕xf2+ 21 ♔h1 ♖e5! 22 ♗f5 ♘e3) 20...♕xf2+ 21 ♔h1 ♘df6 (21...♖e5?! 22 ♗f5 ♖c5 23 ♗xg4 ♖xc3 24 ♗xc3 and wins) 22 ♖f1 ♕g3 23 ♘f5! ♕b8 (if 23...♘f2+, then 24 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 25 ♘h6+) 24 ♕c2 ♗xf3 25 gxf3 ♖xd3 26 ♗xf6! gxf6 27 fxg4 ♖h3+ 28 ♔g1 and White parries the attack, retaining a material advantage.

Thus, objectively the sacrifice 17...♗xh2+?! would have placed Black on the verge of defeat. To clear his conscience, Tal was also considering a reserve possibility 17...♕e5 18 ♘4f3 ♕h5 'with full compensation for the pawn', although in fact after 19 ♖e1 White has the advantage here.

After Spassky's insipid reply the 15...d4?! breakthrough proves fully justified.

17...♘e5 (now Black has a clear initiative) **18 ♘xe5**

After 18 ♖e1 ♗xf3! 19 ♘xf3 ♗c7 20 ♕d2 ♘xf3+ 21 gxf3 ♕d6 22 f4 ♘d5 23 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24 ♖e1 ♖e6 White has a very difficult position.

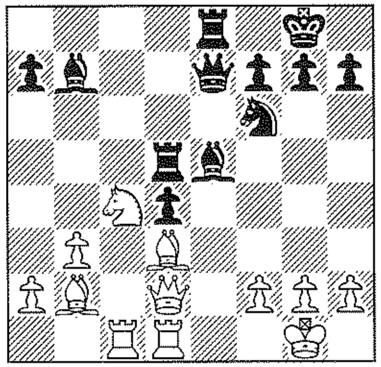
18...♗xe5 19 ♘c4?

This leads to a rapid loss, but it is hard to offer White any good advice. 19 ♘f1 ♘d5 20 ♘g3 ♘f4 21 ♗f1 h5! is dangerous for him (Tal), and he loses by force after 19 ♖e1? ♘g4! 20 g3 ♕f6 21 f3 ♗xf3 22 ♖f1 ♘xh2 23 ♗e4 ♗xg3 24 ♗xf3 ♕h4, or 20 ♘f1 ♕h4 21 g3 ♘xf2! (this is simpler than 21...♘xh2!? 22 gxh4 ♘f3+ 23 ♔h1 ♘xe1+ 24 ♔g1 ♘xd3 etc.) 22 ♔xf2 ♕f6+ 23 ♔g1 ♕f3.

Possibly the only chance of repelling the attack was 19 ♗a3!? ♕e6 20 ♘f1, for example: 20...♗f4 21 ♖b1 ♕c6 22 f3 or 20...♘d5 21 ♕xa7 ♖d7 22 ♗b5 ♘c3 23 ♖xc3 ♕d5 24 f3 ♕xb5 25 ♖c5.

19...♖d5! (the decisive inclusion of the rook with gain of tempo) **20 ♕d2**

Or 20 ♗a3 ♕e6! 21 ♕xa7 ♗xh2+ 22 ♔xh2 ♖h5+ 23 ♔g1 ♖h1+ 24 ♔xh1 ♕h3+ 25 ♔g1 ♕xg2 mate.



20...♗xh2+!

Very fine! 'A familiar theme in a slightly new setting.' (Tal)

21 ♔xh2 ♖h5+! (but not 21...♘g4+? 22 ♔g3) **22 ♔g1**

Now if 22 ♔g3 there is 22...♘e4+ 23 ♗xe4 ♕h4+ 24 ♔f3 ♕xe4+ 25 ♔g3 ♕h4 mate.

In such cases I draw an imaginary vertical line down the middle of the board: all Black's pieces are on the kingside, apart from the b7-bishop, but it is also attacking the king; all White's pieces, by contrast, are on the queenside, apart from his wretched king, which has somehow been left behind at g1. Hence the result.

22...♘g4 0-1

23 ♕f4 ♕h4! or 23 ♖e1 ♖h1+! 24 ♔xh1 ♕h4+ and mate.

It was not very often that Spassky was defeated in such fashion! Tal played with his customary inventiveness and a certain element of bluff, as in his younger years. The jury awarded this game the brilliancy prize.

Nevertheless, Mikhail Nekhemevich declared after the tournament: 'Boris simply provoked me into making a combination. In order to lay yourself bare like that, you have to be in excellent form, and that was not the case with Spassky... My best game in Montreal was the one with Hübner. The combination in it was far more original than a simple variation on the ... ♗xh2 theme.'

Game 143

M.Tal-R.Hübner

Montreal 1979, 13th round

Caro-Kann Defence B19

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗f5

Botvinnik played this in his matches with Smyslov and Tal (*Game No.73*), as did the author of these lines in the 1970s. In Baku this variation was advocated by my trainer Alexander Shakarov, who had discovered several 'holes' in the popular opening analyses of Boleslavsky. At that time everyone believed the books, and any discovery created the impression that you already knew something. It was while studying the complicated positions arising here that I developed my leaning towards lengthy, forcing variations.

5 ♘g3 ♗g6 6 h4 (in the early 1960s Tal alternated between 6 ♘1e2 and 6 ♗c4) **6...h6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7 8 h5!**

The source game was Spassky-Petrosian (Moscow 13th matchgame 1966). Previously the immediate 8 ♗d3 had been played. By moving to h5, the pawn blocks the black g7- and h6-pawns (which is good for the endgame), and in addition the h1-rook may come into play via h4. On the other hand, in the middlegame this pawn may become a weakness. A dilemma typical of the modern opening!

8...♗h7 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♘gf6 11 ♗f4 ♕a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♕c7 13 0-0-0

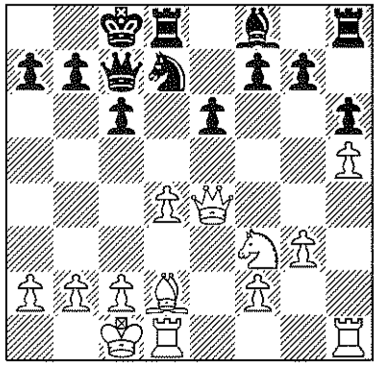
'The choice between this move and 13 c4 is a matter of mood. In the present game White chooses a fairly venomous plan, which was brought into practice by Geller.' (Tal)

13...e6 14 ♘e4 0-0-0 15 g3 (with the intention of ♗f4) **15...♘xe4**

If 15...♘c5 16 ♘xc5 ♗xc5, then 17 c4! ♗b6 18 ♗c3 is strong. Against Tseshkovsky (46th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1978) I tried 15...c5, but after 16 ♗f4 c4 17 ♕e2 ♕c6 18 ♘xf6 gxf6 19 d5! exd5 20 ♘d4 ♕a6 21 ♔b1 ♗d6 22 ♕f3! I also failed to equalise.

16 ♕xe4

One of the *tabiyas* of the entire variation.



16...♘f6

'The e5-square should not have been left open for the enemy knight. 16...♗e7 was more accurate.' (Tal) This is what I played against Geller in the same 46th USSR Championship (Tbilisi 1978), but after 17 ♔b1 ♖he8 18 ♕e2! ♗d6 19 ♖he1 ♘f6 (19...♖e7?! 20 c4 c5 21 ♗c3

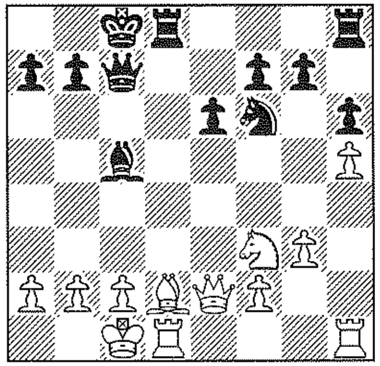
♘f6 22 ♘e5! is bad for Black, Kasparov-Vukic, Skara 1980) I could have faced difficult problems if White had replied 20 ♗c1!

After the games with Tseshkovksy and Geller I stopped playing the Caro-Kann and switched completely to the Sicilian Defence. But, for the sake of accuracy, I will give the best defence: 16...♗d6! 17 c4 c5 18 ♗c3 cxd4 19 ♗xd4 ♘f6 20 ♕e2 ♕a5 21 ♔b1, and now not 21...♗c7?! 22 c5 ♕a4 23 b3 ♕c6 24 ♘e5 ♗xe5 25 ♗xe5 ♘e4? 26 ♗xg7 with an obvious advantage to White (Hübner-Hjartarson, Barcelona 1989), but Hübner's suggestion of 21...♕f5+! 22 ♔a1 ♗c7 23 ♗xa7 ♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 ♕xh5 with sharp play.

17 ♕e2 c5?!

The thematic undermining move, but at the given moment it is not altogether appropriate. The correct path is 17...♗d6! 18 c4 c5 19 ♗c3 cxd4 20 ♗xd4 ♕a5 21 ♔b1 ♕f5+!, as in the previous variation.

18 dxc5 ♗xc5



19 ♖h4!

Subtly exploiting the opponent's error: both 20 ♖c4 and 20 b4 are threatened. Tal spent about 40 minutes on this move: he had to check the approaches to the paradoxical combination he had found. Black now encounters unexpected difficulties.

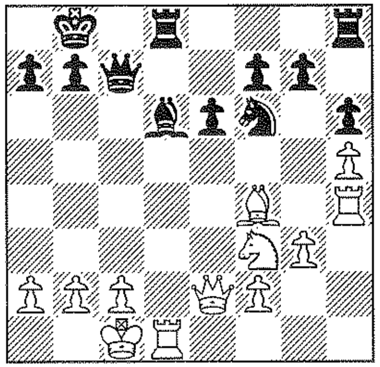
19...♔b8?

An automatic reply. Tal spent a long time seeking the correct path after the only defence 19...♕e7 and in the end placed his choice on 20 ♖c4 ♔b8 21 ♘e5! (threatening ♘xf7; 21 ♗f4+?! ♔a8) 21...♖d5 22 ♗f4 ♗d6 23 ♖c6!? with the very unpleasant threat of ♖xd6. Alas, this is an illusion! After 23...♔a8! 24 ♖xd5?! (24 ♖c4 with equality) 24...exd5 25 ♖xd6 ♖e8!! White's rook is trapped and it is not easy for him to find even a draw: 26 ♖xf6 gxf6 or 26 ♖a6 bxa6 27 ♕xa6 ♕c7 etc.

It is another matter that instead of 22 ♗f4 White also has the possibility of 22 ♘xf7!? ♕xf7 23 ♗f4+ ♔a8 24 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 25 ♖xc5 ♘xf4 26 ♕c4! a6 27 gxf4 with an extra pawn and winning chances.

20 ♗f4 ♗d6

Black still does not suspect anything...



21 ♖xd6! ♖xd6 22 ♘e5!

Exploiting the diagonal pin to maximum effect. 'A relatively new combinative idea: for a time White blocks the key diagonal, bringing his knight into play with decisive effect. Only now did Hübner sink into thought, but it was too late! There is no satisfactory defence against the threats of ♘xf7 and ♘c4.' (Tal)

22...♔a8

'The only chance. 22...♘d5 23 ♘xf7 ♘xf4 24 ♖xf4 ♖f8 25 ♘xd6 ♖xf4 26 ♘b5! ♕c4 27 ♕e5+ will not do, and 22...♖hd8 23 ♘c4 ♘e8 24 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 25 ♖g4 is also hopeless.' (Tal) I agree: 25...♕a5 26 ♕e5 ♕xa2 27 ♕c5! ♕a1+ 28 ♔d2 ♕a6 29 ♖xg7 ♔a8?! 30 ♕c7!

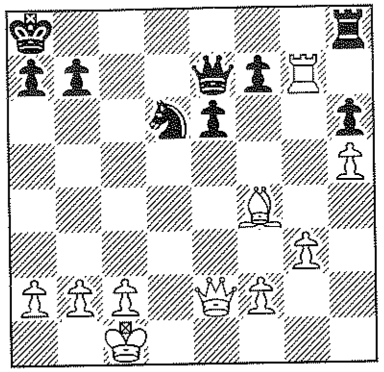
23 ♘c4!

'I did not want to allow my opponent counterplay after 23 ♘xf7 e5!' (Tal) Although here too White would probably have won by 24 ♘xh8! (but not 24 ♗xe5? ♕xf7 25 ♗xd6 ♕xa2) 24...exf4 25 ♖xf4.

23...♘e8 (but not 23...e5? 24 ♗xe5 ♖e6 25 ♗xc7! ♖xe2 26 ♘b6+ axb6 27 ♖a4 mate) **24 ♖g4!** (even better than 24 ♘xd6) **24...♕e7**

It turns out that the g7-pawn cannot be defended: 24...♖g8 25 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 26 ♕d3 ♖d8 (forced) 27 ♖xg7 and wins.

25 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 26 ♖xg7

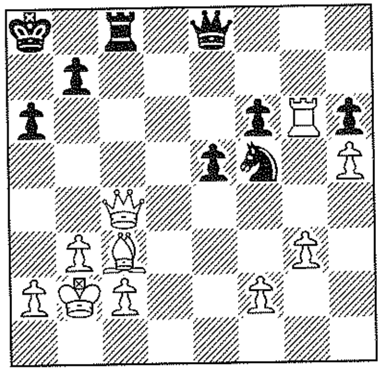


With the win of this important pawn the game is effectively decided, but Hübner continues to resist tenaciously.

26...♘f5 27 ♖g4 ♖d8 28 ♗e5

'An accurate plan. White intends to consolidate his king's defences and then to occupy himself with the h6-pawn. It is obvious that any ending is easily won for him.' (Tal)

28...f6 29 ♗c3 e5 30 b3 a6 31 ♔b2 ♕e6 32 ♕c4! ♕e8 33 ♖g6 ♖c8



34 ♕a4! (a decisive game of tempo) **34...♕d8**

If 34...♕e6, then 35 g4. It is also hopeless to play 34...♕xa4 35 bxa4 ♖c6 36 g4 ♖b6+ 37 ♔c1 ♖c6 38 ♗xe5.

35 ♕e4!

'The immediate 35 g4 ♘d6 36 ♖xh6 ♘b5 would have led to great complications, which are quite unnecessary for White.' (Tal) Although here too after 37 ♗a5 ♕d5 38 ♕b4 ♘d4 39 c4 ♕f3 40 ♕d2 ♕xg4 41 ♗b6 he has an obvious advantage.

35...♘d6 36 ♕d3 ♕c7 (if 36...e4, then 37 ♕d4! ♕c7 38 a4, winning) **37 ♗b4!**

Avoiding a clever trap: if 37 ♖xf6? there would have followed not 37...♘b5 as suggested by Tal, but 37...e4! 38 ♕xd6 (38 ♕d2 ♘b5) 38...♕xc3+ 39 ♔a3 ♕a5+ with perpetual.

37...♘b5

Now in the event of 37...e4 38 ♕xd6 (but not 38 ♗xd6?? exd3 39 ♗xc7 d2 and wins) 38...♕xc2+ 39 ♔a3 ♕c1+ 40 ♔a4 the king escapes from the checks.

38 ♖xf6 a5 (not 38...♘d4 because of 39 ♖xa6+! bxa6 40 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 41 ♗d6) **39 ♗d6**

'This hard-working bishop goes off for a deserved rest.' (Tal)

39...♘xd6 40 ♖xd6 e4 41 ♕d2 1-0

A technical game, typical of the later Tal: elegant tactics and an accurate conversion of an advantage.

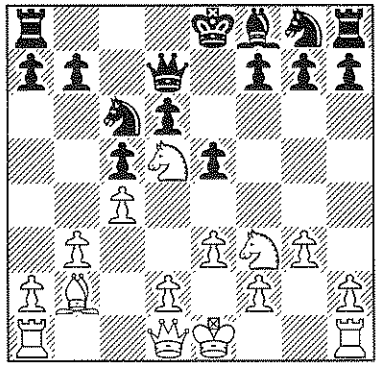
In an interview for the tournament book, Tal gave this interesting reply to a question about the evolution of his style: 'Today the squares d5, f5 and e6 (my visiting cards, so to speak), are so well covered. Have a poke in there – there are four defenders!... No, it's nothing to do with me – it's my opponents! My style is just the same. But I have become a little older and, perhaps, I see a little more for my opponents and a little less for myself. I am convinced that, protected by all this armour, I would have simply torn to pieces that challenger of 1960!' However, it is hard to say whether the 43-year-old Tal would have been able to withstand the furious thrust of youth...

In both the 1978 USSR Championship, and Montreal 1979, he was undefeated, but between them a vexing 'zero' crept in, inflicted by an outsider at the finish of the international tournament in Tallinn 1979 (1. Petrosian – 12 out of 16; 2-3. Tal and Vaganian – 11½; 4. Bronstein – 10), his sole failure in 79 games.

Also relating to these times is one of his most brilliant games, which was judged the best in the 27th volume of *Chess Informator*.

Game 144
M.Tal-D.Velimirovic
Yugoslavia-USSR Match, Teslic 1979
English Opening A30

1 c4 c5 2 b3 (avoiding any opening discussions) **2...♘c6 3 ♗b2 e5 4 g3 d6 5 ♗g2 ♗e6?!** (there is a wide choice of better moves here: 5...g6, 5...f5 or 5...♘f6) **6 ♘c3 ♕d7 7 ♘f3 ♗h3?!** (7...♗e7) **8 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 9 ♘d5 ♕d7** (9...0-0-0 10 b4!) **10 e3**



White intends to attack the centre with d2-d4.

10...♘ce7?!

Black dangerously delays his development. 10...♘ge7 was more sensible, after which Tal gives the variation 11 d4 (11 0-0!?) 11...cxd4 12 exd4 e4 13 ♘d2 ♘xd5 14 cxd5 ♘b4 15 ♘xe4 ♘xd5 16 0-0 ♗e7 17 ♕h5 with a slight advantage to White. But 11...e4 12 ♘d2 ♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘b4 14 ♘xe4 ♕f5 would appear to be better.

11 ♘c3! ♘f6 (11...f5!? is interesting) **12 0-0 e4!** (12...♘g6 13 d4!) **13 ♘g5!?**

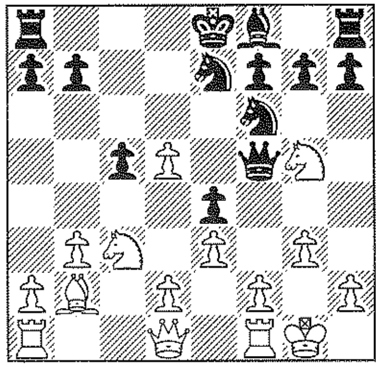
With far-reaching aims, although both 13 ♘h4 ♕h3 14 f3 ♘g6 15 ♘xg6 (15 ♘g2 exf3 16 ♘e1!) 15...hxg6 16 ♖f2 (Dvoretsky) and 13 ♘e1 with the idea of f2-f3 or d2-d3 (and if 13...d5, then 14 ♕c2) could also have cast doubts on Black's risky play.

13...d5!?

Velimirovic was probably not satisfied with 13...♕f5 14 ♘b5! (of course, not 14 f4? h6! 15 g4 ♕g6) 14...♖d8! (14...♕xg5? 15 ♘xd6+ ♔d7 16 ♘xf7) 15 ♘c7+ ♔d7 16 ♘xf7 ♔xc7 17 ♘xh8 and f2-f3!

14 cxd5 ♕f5

As they say in such cases, there is a smell of thunder in the air.

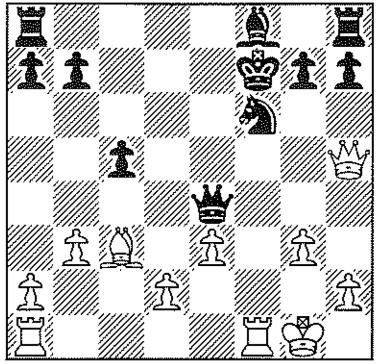


15 ♘xf7?!

A sudden blow at the weak point. White can hardly gain any real advantage by 15 ♘b5 ♘exd5 16 ♗xf6! (16 f4? h6!) 16...gxf6 17 d3, or 15 f4 h6 16 g4 ♕g6 17 ♘gxe4 ♘xe4 18 f5 ♘xc3! (Tal) 19 fxg6 ♘xd1 20 gxf7+ ♔d7 21 ♖axd1 ♘xd5 22 ♖f5 (Dvoretsky).

Black can also be satisfied with 15 d6 ♘c6 16 ♘b5?! ♕xg5 17 ♘c7+ ♔d7 18 ♘xa8 ♗xd6 (Tal), but in this variation it is stronger play 16 f4! (16 d7+!?) 16...h6 (16...exf3?! 17 ♕xf3 ♕xg5? 18 ♘e4! and wins, or 17...♕xf3 18 ♖xf3 ♗xd6 19 ♘b5!; 16...♗xd6?! 17 ♕c2 ♘b4 18 ♘cxe4!) 17 d7+! ♔e7 18 h4! with the initiative. It would appear that there are more chances of equalising with 15...♕xg5!? 16 dxe7 ♗xe7 17 f3! exf3 18 ♕xf3 0-0-0.

15...♔xf7 16 f3! ♘exd5 (if 16...exf3?! both 17 ♖xf3 ♕e5 18 e4 and the immediate 17 e4! are good) **17 fxe4 ♘xc3 18 ♗xc3 ♕xe4 19 ♕h5+** (19 ♖f4?! ♕c6)



19...♔e6

19...♔g8? would have been fatal: 20 ♗xf6! gxf6 21 ♖xf6 ♕e7 22 ♕d5+ ♔g7 23 ♕g5 mate. If 19...♕g6 Tal gives 20 ♕d5+ 'and wins', although after 20...♔e8 21 ♕xb7 ♖d8 (21...♕e4 is also not so clear) 22 ♕xa7 (or 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 ♕xa7 ♗e7) 22...♗e7 23 ♗a5 ♖c8 24 ♕b7 ♕g4 the win is a long way off.

20 ♕h3+ ♔d6!

It is interesting to speculate as to how the game would have ended, had Black played 20...♔f7. Tal was not even contemplating a draw with 21 ♕h5+ and was intending to press with 21 ♖f5?! ♗e7 22 ♖af1, but after 22...♖ad8 23 ♖e5 ♕c6 24 ♕h5+ ♔g8 25 ♕g5 ♖d5 White is simply material down.

21 b4!

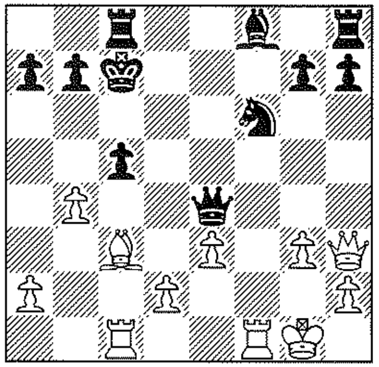
An unpleasant surprise! White no longer had no choice: 21 ♗xf6? gxf6 22 ♖xf6+ ♔c7 23 ♖e6 (23 ♖f7+ ♗e7) 23...♕d5 24 ♖f1 ♖d8! 25 ♖f7+ ♖d7 (Tal) or 25...♔b8 (Dvoretsky) is bad for him.

21...♔c7

21...cxb4? was cheerless: 22 ♗xf6 (if 22 ♖f4?, then not 22...♕xf4 23 exf4! bxc3 24 e4!, but 22...bxc3 23 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 with equality – Dvoretsky) 22...gxf6 23 ♖xf6+ ♔c7 24 ♖c1+ ♔d8 25 ♖f4 ♕e5 (or 25...♕g6 26 ♕h4+ ♗e7 27 ♖d4+ ♔e8 28 ♖e4 ♕d6 29 ♕h5+) 26 ♕h4+ ♗e7 27 ♖d4+ ♔e8 28 ♖e4 ♗xh4 29 ♖xe5+ with an obvious advantage. If 21...♘d5 Tal had in mind 22 bxc5+!? (22 ♖f7 ♘xc3? 23 ♕d7+ ♔e5 24 dxc3! ♕xe3+ 25 ♔f1 and wins, but 22...♖d8 23 bxc5+ ♔c6 is better) 22...♔c6 23 ♗d4! with appreciable pressure.

22 ♖ac1 ♖c8 (22...♖e8!? – Dvoretsky).

It only remains to play ...♔b8. The first impression is that White's frantic attack is petering out...



23 ♖f5! ♕g4?!

23...♔b8? is not possible in view of 24 ♗e5+ ♗d6 25 bxc5 or 24...♔a8 25 ♖xf6. But after 23...♘d7! 24 bxc5 ♔b8 the black king would have been assured of escaping from all dangers, and the extra knight would have told.

24 ♗e5+ ♔d7 (the only way: 24...♔b6? 25 ♖xf6+) **25 ♕f1!** (with the threats of ♕b5+ and ♕d3+) **25...♕e4?**

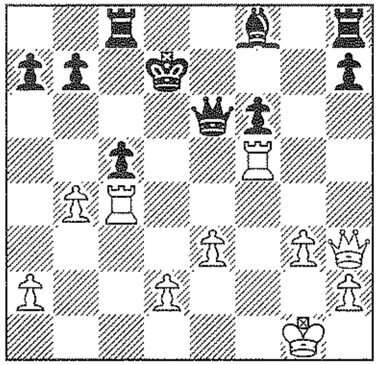
Here time-trouble already has its effect. I do not see anything terrible for Black after 25...c4! – in the event of 26 ♖f4 ♕e6 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 28 ♖xf6 ♕d5 he even has some advantage.

26 ♖c4 ♕c6 27 ♕h3!

As an alternative Tal gave the 'winning' variation 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 28 ♖xf6 ♕d5 29 ♕h3+ ♔c7 30 ♖xf8, but after 29...♔d8! the outcome is completely unclear.

27...♕e6?! (of course, 27...♔d8 28 bxc5 ♘d7 was more tenacious) **28 ♗xf6 gxf6**

If 28...♕xc4 White would have won by 29 ♗xg7!! (but not 29 ♖d5+? ♔c7! 30 ♗e5+ ♔b6 or 30 ♕d7+ ♔b8 31 ♗e5+ ♗d6!) 29...♗xg7 30 ♖f7+ ♔c6 31 ♕d7+ ♔b6 32 ♕xb7 mate.



29 ♖e4! ♕xa2 (29...♕xe4 30 ♖e5+) **30 ♖xc5+ 1-0**

It cannot be denied that when Tal was on form, his inventiveness worked gloriously! True, such an attack could succeed only against an opponent of the standard of Velimirovic: the latter made a painfully large number of mistakes. If in his place it had been Korchnoi...

Finally, in the autumn of 1979 Mikhail Nekhemevich at last broke through to the Candidates, brilliantly winning the Interzonal tournament in Riga: 1. Tal – 14 out of 17 (again undefeated!); 2. Polugayevsky – 11½; 3-4. Adorjan and Ribli – 11; 5-6. Gheorghiu and Romanishin – 10½; 7. Larsen – 10 etc.

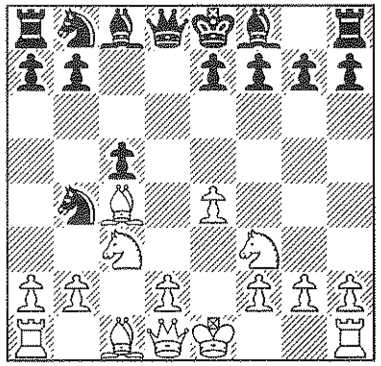
In the process he spectacularly crushed his main rival and traditionally difficult opponent – Lev Polugayevsky (only Korchnoi was a more difficult opponent for Tal).

Game 145
L.Polugayevsky-M.Tal
Interzonal Tournament,
Riga 1979, 2nd round
English Opening A34

1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 (the trend of the time) **5...♘b4**

In the game Timman-Tal (Montreal 1979) played not long before, after 5...♘xc3 6 dxc3 ♕xd1+ 7 ♔xd1 ♘c6 8 ♗e3 Black obtained a slightly inferior position (but more important – without any prospect of an initiative!).

6 ♗c4



6...♗e6

Subsequently this continuation came to be considered dubious and they began playing 6...♘d3+ 7 ♔e2 ♘f4+ 8 ♔f1 ♘e6 9 b4!? (9 ♘e5 has also been tried) 9...cxb4, for example:

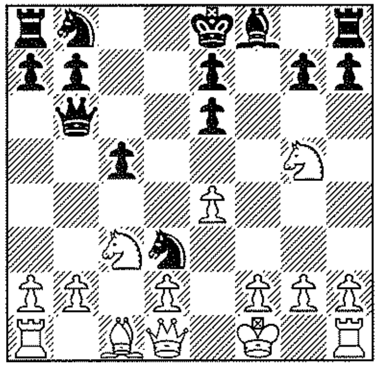
1) 10 ♘d5 g6! 11 ♗b2 (11 a3!? ♗g7 12 ♖b1 ♘c5!) 11...♗g7 12 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 13 ♘xb4 0-0 14 d4? (it is better to play 14 h3 e5! 15 g3 ♗c6 with equality) 14...♗g4 with an excellent game for Black, as in the well-known 'twin' games Hübner-Portisch (Abano Terme 5th matchgame 1980) and Polugayevsky-Korchnoi (Buenos Aires 14th matchgame 1980);

2) 10 ♘e2! ♘c7 11 d4 e6 12 h4 ♘d7 (12...♗d6!? 13 h5 h6 14 ♖h4 ♘d7 15 ♗b2 ♗e7 16 ♖h3 ♘f6 17 ♗d3 ♗d7 18 ♘e5 ♗b5 19 ♔g1 0-0 20 ♘f4 ♖c8 21 ♖g3 with compensation for the pawn, Hübner-Tukmakov, Wijk aan Zee 1984) 13 ♗g5 ♗e7 14 ♖c1 ♘b6 15 ♗d3 f6 16 ♗f4 ♘a6 17 h5 0-0 18 ♕b3 ♗d7 19 ♘g3 ♔h8 20 ♘h4 ♖f7 21 ♗e3 ♖c8 22 ♖xc8 ♘xc8 23 ♘g6+! ♔g8 24 ♘f4 ♘c7 25 e5 ♘b6 26 exf6 gxf6 27 ♗g6! hxg6 28 hxg6 ♖g7 29 ♕d1 ♗e8 30 ♕h5 with crushing threats (Kasparov-Grünberg, Hamburg simultaneous 1985).

However, 9...g6! is stronger (Seirawan-Miles, London 1982). This move, which Shirov played against me in a simultaneous display at a session of the Botvinnik-Kasparov School was enough to discourage White from playing 6 ♗c4 for some time. And only recently was the discussion renewed in the variation 10 bxc5 ♗g7 11 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 12 d4 ♘c6 13 ♗e3 (Vallejo-Leko, Linares 2003).

7 ♗xe6 ♘d3+ 8 ♔f1 fxe6 9 ♘g5 ♕b6!?

A novelty, prepared by Tal together with his trainers Kapengut and Koblents. White stands better after both 9...♕d7 10 ♕f3 ♘e5 11 ♕h3 ♕d3+ 12 ♕xd3 ♘xd3 13 g3!, and 9...♘c6 10 ♘xe6 ♕d7 11 ♘xc5! ♘xc5 12 ♕h5+ g6 13 ♕xc5 ♕d3+ 14 ♔g1 ♗g7 (14...0-0-0 15 h4!) 15 ♕b5! ♖d8 16 ♕xd3 ♖xd3 17 ♔f1 (Timman-Stean, Amsterdam 1978).



10 ♕e2?

On encountering a surprise, White does not react in the best way. 10 ♕f3! is much more dangerous for Black, for example: 10...c4 (if 10...♕a6, then 11 ♔g1 g6 12 h4! is possible) 11 b3 h6 (11...♘e5!?) 12 bxc4 ♘xc1? (12...♘e5 was now essential) 13 ♘f7! ♖g8 14 ♘e5! ♕b2 15 ♕f7+ with an irresistible attack (Tukmakov-Peshina, Klaipeda 1980).

10...c4 11 b3

'White's primary objective is to deprive the advanced knight of support, but, strangely enough, Black succeeds in establishing himself in enemy territory: the knight holds its ground at d3 almost to the end of the game.' (Tal) 11 ♕e3!? ♕a6 12 ♕h3 was interesting.

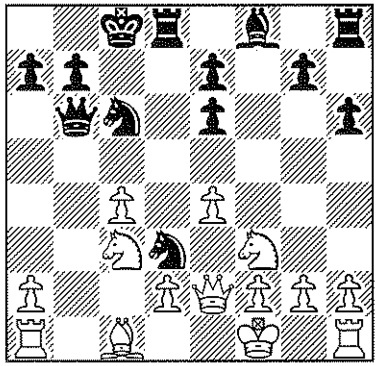
11...h6! 12 ♘f3?!

'It is probable that 12 ♘h3 (*or 12 ♕b5+!? ♔d7 13 ♘h3, but not 12 bxc4? ♘f4! and ...hxg5 – G.K.*), covering f2, was slightly more accurate. It is important that the attempt at an immediate attack by 12 ♘a4 does not succeed, since after 12...♕d4 (12...♕c6!?) 13 ♘xe6 ♕xa1 14 ♕h5+ g6! (14...♔d7?? 15 ♕d5+ ♔c8 16 ♕d8 mate) 15 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 no decisive continuation is apparent.' (Tal)

However, here there is an obvious 'hole' in Tal's analysis. He overlooked that White has the much stronger 13 ♗b2! ♘xb2 14 ♘f3! (less is promised by 14 ♕h5+ g6! 15 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 16 ♕xe6+ ♔c7 17 ♘c3) 14...♕f6 15 e5, and after 16 ♘xb2 White dominates. Therefore instead of 12...♕d4?, the correct move is 12...♕a6! (if 12...♕a5?! there is 13 ♘f3 ♘c6 14 ♘b2 ♘xc1 15 ♖xc1 ♕xa2 16 ♘xc4 ♕xb3 17 d4) 13 ♕h5+ g6! 14 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 15 ♗b2 hxg5 16 ♗xh8 cxb3 17 ♔g1 ♕xa4 18 axb3 ♕b5 with a slight advantage to Black.

12...♘c6 13 bxc4 0-0-0

Another important moment.



14 g3?

If 14 ♗a3 Black was planning 14...g5! (but not 14...♕a5? 15 ♘b5 a6 16 ♘d6+ exd6 17 ♕xd3). There is also no point in playing 14 ♘d5?! exd5 15 ♕xd3 (15 cxd5 ♘ce5 or 15 exd5 ♘cb4 can hardly be correct) 15...♘b4! 16 ♕c3 (16 ♕b1 dxc4; 16 ♕d4? ♕xd4 17 ♘xd4 dxc4 18 ♘e6 ♖d6) 16...dxe4 17 ♘e5. Here Tal suggested 17...g5? 18 ♘f7? ♗g7?

(18...♘d3! 19 c5 ♕a6! wins) 19 ♕xg7 ♘d3, but firstly, after 20 c5! ♕b5 (20...♕xc5 21 ♕c3) 21 ♔g1 ♖h7 22 ♕xh7 ♕xc5 23 h3 ♕xf2+ 24 ♔h2 ♕f4+ Black only has a draw, and secondly, after 18 ♖b1! ♗g7 19 ♖xb4 ♗xe5 20 ♕h3+ he is altogether lost. In fact 17...♘d3! 18 ♘xd3 ♖xd3 19 ♕c2 e6 is correct, with a clear advantage.

But it was undoubtedly better for White to play 14 ♘e1! ♘ce5 15 ♘xd3 ♘xd3 16 ♕e3 ♕xe3 17 dxe3, although after 17...g5 and ...♗g7 Black has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

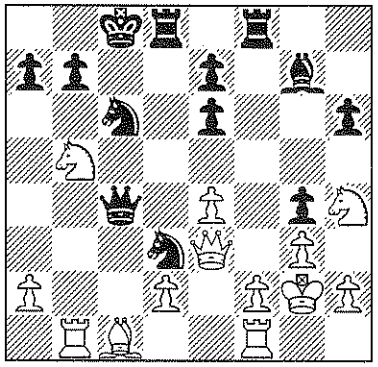
14...g5 15 ♔g2

'The exchanging operation 15 ♘d5?! exd5 16 ♕xd3 ♗g7! 17 e5 (17 ♖b1 dxc4!) 17...♖hf8 holds little promise for White. He wants to "smoke out" the knight from d3 by ♘f3-e1, and therefore Black makes the following, very effective move.' (Tal)

15...♕c5! 16 ♖b1 (16 ♘e1?! ♕xc4) **16...♗g7 17 ♘b5**

'Sensing that his position is already very difficult, Polugayevsky attempts a counterattack, but it proves insufficient.' (Tal)

17...♕xc4! (with the threat of 18...♘f4+) **18 ♕e3 ♖hf8** (threatening 19...♖xf3 or 19...g4; 18...a6!?) **19 ♖f1** (not 19 ♘xa7+? ♘xa7 20 ♕xa7 because of 20...♕xe4!) **19...g4** (the prosaic 19...a6! 20 ♘a3 ♕xa2 also wins) **20 ♘h4**



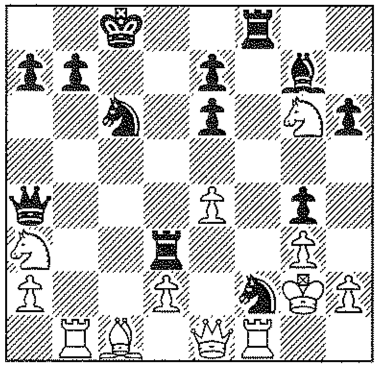
20...♘xf2!?

Yes, Mikhail Nekhemevich loved to make pretty sacrifices! Even at the expense of simplicity: 20...♖xf2+! 21 ♖xf2 ♘xf2 22 ♔xf2 (22 ♕xf2? ♕xe4+) 22...♖f8+ 23 ♘f5 exf5 and the curtain can be lowered.

21 ♘g6 (an additional chance; 21 ♖xf2 ♖xf2+ would have led to the previous variation) **21...♖d3!**

'In this game the d3-square has proved to be something of a staging post for Black. Weaker was 21...♖f3? 22 ♘xa7+ ♘xa7 23 ♕xa7 ♕xe4 24 ♘xe7+ ♔c7 25 ♕b6+ ♔d7 26 ♕xb7+.' (Tal) And indeed, after 26...♔e8 27 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 28 ♖b4 ♘xd2 29 ♖d1 ♔xe7 30 ♖xd2 ♖xd2+ 31 ♗xd2 the position is a draw.

22 ♘a3 (if 22 ♕e1, then 22...♖df3 23 ♘xf8 ♘d3) **22...♕a4 23 ♕e1** (or 23 ♕e2 ♘d4 24 ♕e1 ♖df3 25 ♘xf8 ♘d3 and wins)



23...♖df3! 24 ♘xf8 ♘d3 25 ♕d1 (25 ♕e2 ♘d4 26 ♕d1 ♕xd1 27 ♖xd1 ♖f2+ 28 ♔h1 ♘f3 and mate would have been a piquant finish) **25...♕xe4** (25...♖f2+ was also strong) **26 ♖xf3 gxf3+ 27 ♔f1** (27 ♕xf3? ♘e1+) **27...♕f5! 28 ♔g1 ♗d4+ 0-1**

This was a complete triumph, effectively the last in Tal's career. Alas, things did not go any further: in the quarter-final Candidates match (Alma Ata 1980) he stumbled against the same Polugayevsky: 2½-5½.

Before this, in January 1980, Tal and I played a training match in Baku, but after two games (I was leading 1½-½) and a series of blitz games Mikhail Nekhemevich was obliged to return urgently to Riga – his uncle had died. That winter Tal looked very pale and played poorly at the 47th USSR Championship in Minsk and at the European Team Championship in Skara. It was evident that an obvious slump had set in, and his preparation also left much to be desired.

An interesting description was given by Polugayevsky about this opponent: 'The present-day Tal, enriched by his creative collaboration in the period of the match in Baguio, is no longer the earlier Tal. He subtly and cunningly plays the openings, willingly goes in for lengthy positional manoeuvring, and is capable of a painstaking and resourceful defence. While professing the romantic tendency in chess, in recent times Tal has become very, very pragmatic. Now he rarely burns his boats behind him, preferring to act in the spirit of the position. But, when studying Tal's play, I thought that, despite his versatility and opening erudition, his deeply concealed passion for attack was bound to prevail. True love never grows old. I was almost certain that Tal would want to "catch" me in my variation, that he would want to refute it. And then...'

And then it became clear that the great chess fighter was no longer capable of seriously fighting for the world championship (for an analysis of the key game in this match – see Volume 3). After his defeat against Polugayevsky, he declared with a slightly sad smile: 'Now I am Polutal!' [*Literally 'semi-Tal' – translator's note.*]

Last Flashes

This heavy defeat in the Candidates match did not, however, prevent him from producing another undefeated series in 1981, this time of 80 games (true, the tournaments were somewhat weaker). One of these was judged by the experts to be the best game in the 31st volume of *Chess Informator.*

Game 146
M.Tal-J.Flesch
Lvov 1981
Caro-Kann Defence B17

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7 (the favourite move of Flohr, Smyslov, Petrosian and now Karpov; 4...♗f5 – *Games Nos.73 and 143*) **5 ♘f3**

5 ♗c4 ♘gf6 6 ♘g5 or the immediate 5 ♘g5 is more topical.

5...♘gf6 6 ♘g3 e6 7 ♗d3 c5 8 c3!? cxd4! 9 ♘xd4 ♗c5 10 0-0 ♗xd4 (10...0-0!? has also been tried many times) **11 cxd4 0-0 12 ♗g5!?**

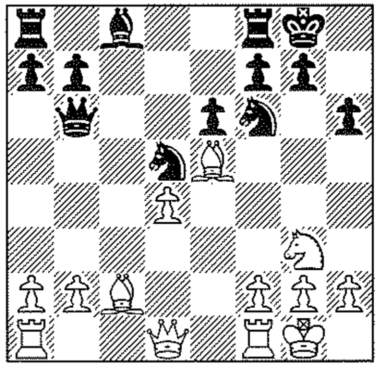
A mini-surprise for the opponent, who was fully prepared for 12 ♗f4 ♘b6 13 ♖c1 ♘bd5 14 ♗e5 ♗d7 (Adorjan-Flesch, Budapest 1971).

12...h6 (12...♕a5 was interesting, not weakening the kingside for the moment) **13 ♗f4 ♘b6 14 ♗c2**

With the intention of creating the standard attacking battery by ♕d3. If 14 ♕d2, then 14...♘fd5! (15 ♗xh6 gxh6 16 ♕xh6 f5 with equality).

14...♘bd5 (but not 14...♘fd5? 15 ♕d3 and not 14...♗d7?! 15 ♕d3 with the threat of ♘h5) **15 ♗e5 ♕b6!?**

If 16 ♕d3 Flesch has in mind 16...♘b4.



16 ♕d3!? (nevertheless, although there was also the quieter 16 ♕d2 or 16 ♗b3!?) **16...♘b4**

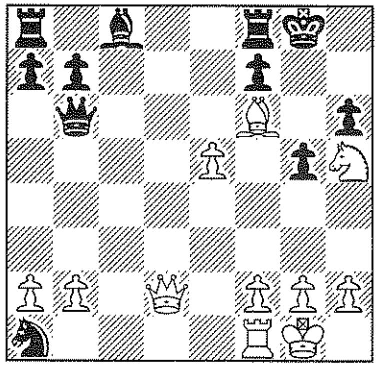
The critical reply. Otherwise White could have developed a dangerous initiative without interference: 16...♖d8 17 ♘e4! or 16...♗d7 17 ♗xf6 (17 ♘h5? ♗b5!) 17...♘xf6 18 ♘h5 ♖fd8 (18...♖fc8 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6 20 ♕h7+ ♔f8 21 ♗b3!) 19 ♘xf6+ gxf6 20 ♕h7+ ♔f8. Tal judged this to be unclear, but after 21 d5! Black's position is unenviable.

17 ♕d2! (of course, not 17 ♕f3? ♘xc2 18 ♗xf6 e5! 19 ♗e7 ♘xa1 and White has no attack) **17...♘xc2**

It is logical to take the bishop immediately, although 17...♘g4!? (but not 17...♘fd5? 18 ♗xg7! ♔xg7 19 ♘h5+) is also not so clear: 18 ♗xg7! ♔xg7 19 ♘h5+ ♔g8 20 h3! ♘xc2 (20...e5 21 ♗b3) 21 ♕xc2 (21 hxg4 e5!) 21...e5 etc.

18 ♗xf6! (of course, all this confusion was not initiated for the sake of 18 ♕xc2 ♘d5) **18...♘xa1** (18...gxf6? 19 ♕xh6) **19 ♘h5 e5!** (not 19...♕b5 20 ♘xg7 ♔h7 21 ♖xa1 ♔g6 22 ♕f4 and wins) **20 dxe5 g5!**

For the moment Flesch is equal to the occasion: Black has successfully repelled the first wave of the attack, and retains his extra material.

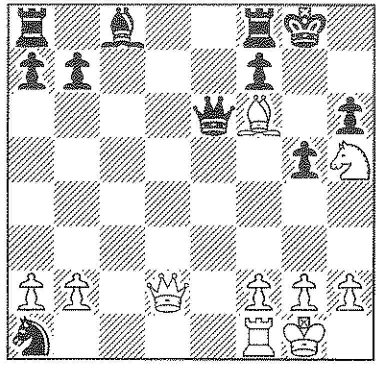


21 e6!?

There is no particular choice: unattractive are both 21 ♖xa1 ♗g4! 22 ♘g3 ♖fd8! and 21 ♗e7 ♗f5! 22 ♘f6+ ♔g7 23 ♖xa1 ♖fd8! 24 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 25 ♕e2 (25 ♕c3 ♖d3!) 25...♗d3 with some advantage to Black.

21...♕xe6

21...fxe6 22 ♕d3 (22 ♖xa1? e5!) 22...♖xf6 was dangerous for Black, but by 21...♗xe6 22 ♗xg5! ♕c5! 23 ♘f6+ ♔h8 24 ♗xh6 ♖fd8 25 ♕f4 ♕c4! he could have forced the exchange of queens: 26 ♖xa1 (not 26 ♕g5? because of 26...♕xf1+ 27 ♔xf1 ♗c4+) 26...♕xf4 27 ♗xf4 ♗xa2 28 ♗e5 with a rather unclear ending.



22 h3!

Typical Tal ingenuity! White, plays on a rook down, as though nothing has happened, although his attack is non-forcing and it can easily come to a standstill, for example, in the event of 22 ♖xa1 ♕g4! 23 ♘g3 ♕f4! 24 ♕c3 ♗e6 or 22 ♗g7 ♕g6 23 ♗xf8 ♕xh5 24 ♗a3 ♗e6.

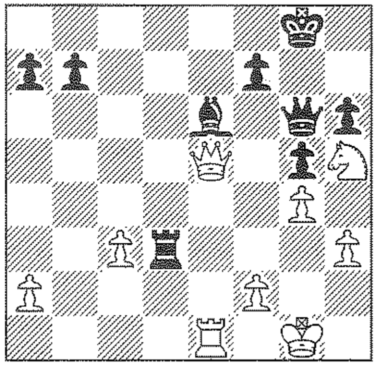
22...♕f5?

The psychological effect of the extra material apparently has its effect: Black wants to punish his opponent without fail. But in fact the position is completely unclear and even after the best move 22...b6! (but not 22...♕xa2? 23 ♗xg5 and not 22...♗d7?! 23 ♖e1 ♕c6 24 ♗c3 f6 25 ♕d3) White has a draw: 23 ♖e1! (23 ♖xa1? ♗b7 and ...♕d5) 23...♕f5! (23...♕c6 24 ♖c1! ♕e6 25 ♗c3 f6 26 ♖e1 ♕f5 27 ♖xa1 ♗b7 28 ♕d4 gives White more chances) 24 g4 ♕c2! (24...♕f3 25 ♖e3 ♕c6 26 ♖c3 is unclear) 25 ♕d6 (with the pretty threat of 26 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 27 ♗g7+ ♔g8 28 ♖e8+ ♔h7 29 ♖h8+ ♔g6 30 ♖xh6 mate) 25...♗b7 (25...♕c5!?) 26 ♗c3 ♕g6 27 ♘f6+ ♔h8 with a draw.

23 ♖xa1 ♗e6 24 ♖e1 ♕g6?!

It is clear that Tal is no longer risking anything and that the problems he has posed have proved too difficult for Flesch. 24...♖fc8!? 25 ♗c3 ♖d8 was probably better, although after 26 ♕e2 White has more than sufficient compensation for the exchange.

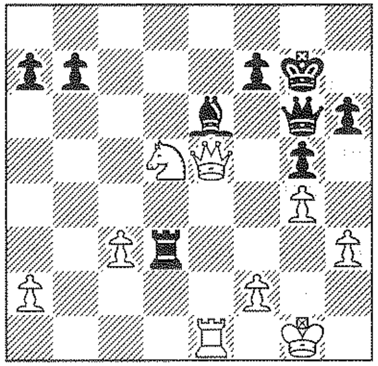
25 g4 ♖ac8 (25...♖fc8!?) **26 ♗c3!** (after 26 ♗e7 ♖c2 27 ♕d4 ♖a8 28 ♘f6+ ♔h8 there is no decisive discovered check) **26...♖fd8 27 ♕e3 ♖d3 28 ♕e5 ♖cxc3 29 bxc3**



29...♔h7

The situation is now critical: both 29...♖xh3 30 ♖d1 ♔h7 31 ♘f6+ ♔g7 32 ♘e4+ ♔h7 33 ♖d8 ♕g7 34 ♘f6+ ♔g6 35 ♖g8 and 29...♗xa2 30 ♖a1 ♖d2 31 ♘f6+ ♔f8 32 c4! are bad for Black. As soon as the 'queen plus knight' battery goes into operation, things become completely hopeless for him.

30 ♘f6+ ♔g7 31 ♘d5+ (31 ♘d7+ ♔g8 32 ♕b8+ ♔g7 33 ♕f8+ ♔h7 34 ♘e5 would have immediately concluded matters)



31...♔h7?!

Resistance would merely have been prolonged by 31...♔f8 32 ♕b8+ (32 ♕h8+? ♕g8 33 ♕xh6+ ♕g7 with a draw) 32...♔g7 33 ♘e7 ♕h7 34 ♕e5+ ♔f8 35 ♘f5! ♗xf5 36 gxf5 ♔g8 37 f6 ♕g6 38 ♕e8+ ♔h7 39 ♖e7.

32 ♘e7 1-0

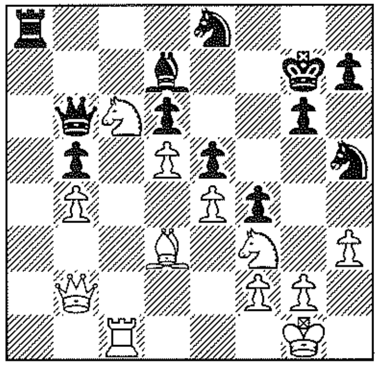
In view of 32...♕g7 33 ♕e4+.

Rather a wild game, wouldn't you agree? I will remind you of the credo of the later Tal: 'For some, chess brilliance is a triumph of logic. An excellent game, in their opinion, is a wonderful classical building of impeccable proportions, in which each element, each little brick stands in its place. And although I too have often been "forced" to win purely positional games, I am more attracted by the triumph of illogicality, irrationality, the absurd: a fierce struggle is raging on the board, subject to some idea, a struggle to carry out some plan, but the outcome is decided by an innocent little pawn, which has nothing in common with the main motif of the drama. Expressing it in mathematical language, I prefer it when in chess the side of a triangle turns out to be longer than the hypotenuse.'

In the next Interzonal (Moscow 1982) Tal started with 3½ out of 4, but in the end he finished half a point behind Beliavsky and me, who both went forward to the Candidates. In the following cycle he nevertheless qualified for the Candidates tournament (Montpellier 1985) and even shared 4th-5th places there with Timman, but after a draw in the play-off match (3-3) it was the Dutchman, who had slightly the better coefficient, who gained the place in the semi-final. The Interzonal in Subotica (1987) brought the ex-champion another disappointment: he was again separated from the trio of prize-winners by just half a point.

Gradually Mikhail Nekhemevich's powers deserted him, and his play become more economical and drier, but even so, from time to time he resembled the former Tal. In the following game, the best in the 43rd volume of *Chess Informator*, in contrast to the game with Ghitescu (*Game No.133*), it was a whole rook that was sacrificed on c5.

Game 147
M.Tal-J.Hjartarson
Reykjavik 1987



36 ♖c5!! (far more spectacular, but more importantly – more effective, than 36 ♘fxe5!? dxe5 37 ♘xe5 ♕f6 38 ♖c2 ♗c8 39 ♗xb5 ♘d6 40 ♗c6 ♖b8 41 b5) **36...♕a6**

36...dxc5 37 ♘fxe5 ♔g8 38 ♘xd7 ♕a6 39 bxc5, 36...♘c7 37 ♘cxe5 and 36...♗xc6 37 ♖xc6 are all clearly bad for Black.

37 ♖xb5 ♘c7?

It was essential to play 37...♗xc6 38 dxc6, and here not 38...♘c7? 39 ♖a5! ♕xc6 (39...♕xd3 40 ♖xa8 ♘xa8 41 ♕a1!) 40 ♘xe5! dxe5 41 ♕xe5+ ♘f6 42 ♖c5 and wins, but 38...♕xc6! 39 ♖a5 ♖xa5 40 bxa5 ♘hf6 41 a6 ♘d7! (41...♘xe4? 42 ♕b7+) with a difficult, but still defensible position.

38 ♖b8! ♕xd3 (or 38...♕a1+ 39 ♕xa1 ♖xa1+ 40 ♔h2 ♘f6 41 ♖b7 ♘fe8 42 b5 ♗c8 43 ♖b8 and wins) **39 ♘cxe5! ♕d1+**

If 39...dxe5, then 40 ♕xe5+ ♘f6 (40...♔h6 41 ♕g5+ ♔g7 42 ♕e7+ ♔h6 43 ♕f8+ with mate) 41 ♕e7+ ♔h6 42 ♕f8+ ♔h5 43 ♕xf6 and wins (Tal).

40 ♔h2 ♖a1 41 ♘g4+! (and not 41 ♘xd7+?? ♔h6) **41...♔f7 42 ♘h6+** (and not instead 42 ♘g5+?? ♔e7) **42...♔e7 43 ♘g8+ 1-0**

In view of 43...♔f7 44 ♘g5 mate. Quite a rout!

In this strong tournament Tal shared 2nd-3rd places, ahead of Korchnoi, Portisch, Polugayevsky... And a year later he again played successfully in Reykjavik, in one of the stages of the World Cup: (1. Kasparov – 11 out of 17; 2. Beliavsky – 10½; 3. Tal – 10). Strangely enough, at the same time he still smoked a great deal and drank spirits.

'Misha, who by then found it hard take his drink, simply fell asleep at the end of the banquet in Reykjavik,' writes Genna Sosonko. 'This happened to him increasingly often, especially in his last years. Korchnoi and Spassky, who were also playing there, had strained relations at that time. But it couldn't be helped, and they looked at each other: " 'Carry him out?" asked one. "Alright," replied the other. The distance was considerable, but the opponents of his youth coped admirably with their task, and the dumbfounded hotel porter was informed that this chess player had thought for a long time, and was very tired...'

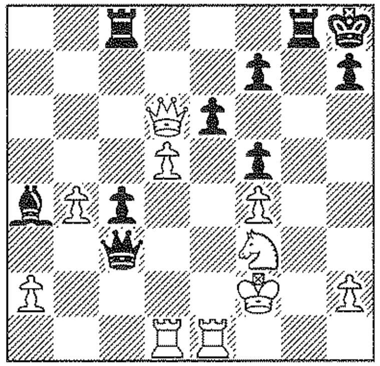
A short while earlier, in February 1988, Tal had confirmed his reputation as an outstanding blitz player by winning the first FIDE lighting world championship. In a tense tournament, held on the knock-out system, Karpov and I were eliminated before the semi-finals, while Mikhail Nekhemevich successfully defeated D.Gurevich, Nogueiras, Yusupov, Chernin, and in the final – Vaganian: 3½-½!

In 1990-91 he played without particular success in the Manila Interzonal and in the last, 58th USSR Championship. But in between he performed excellently (5 out of 6) for Porz in the German Bundesliga. He was then living close to Cologne, together with his wife Geleya and daughter Zhanna (they were friendly with his first wife Sally and his son Gera, who left the USSR back in 1980).

In the autumn of 1991 we met in Tilburg, where I was playing in the traditional super-tournament. The general impression was accurately conveyed later by grandmaster Sosonko: 'He looked terrible, much older than his age, but he was still the same Misha. Replying to a greeting by one of his acquaintances, he said "Thank you." "What for?" "For recognising me." He would usually sit in the press centre with his customary cigarette, saying little, but every remark he made on chess was always to the point. He livened up a little when, in his customary manner, he showed an audience at the Max Euwe Academy one of his latest games: against Panno from the tournament in Buenos Aires. The young people of the early nineties looked at him as if he were Staunton or Zukertort. It was a miracle not that he was alive, but that he did not die sooner...'

The last tournament game of the 55-year-old Tal, which became his swansong, occurred on 5 May 1992 at the very finish of the grandmaster tournament in Barcelona. He was unwell and running a temperature, and therefore after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 he offered a draw. But, fortunately for chess, he received a refusal.

Game 148
M.Tal-V.Akopian
Barcelona 1992



29 ♖d4!

When he attacked the rook with his bishop, Black underestimated this brilliant reply: both interference, and an ambush!

29...♖g7?

A time-trouble error. 29...♕b2+ 30 ♖d2 ♕f6 was essential, whereas 29...exd5? was bad in view of 30 ♕e5+ ♖g7 31 ♖g1 ♕b2+ 32 ♘d2 ♖cg8 33 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 34 ♕xd5. Somewhere around here Akopian himself offered a draw, but too late...

30 dxe6 ♗c6 31 ♘g5! (of course, not 31 ♖e3? ♖g2+!) **31...♖xg5?!**

Desperation! It would appear that after 31...fxe6 (31...h6? 32 exf7! hxg5 33 ♕h6+) 32 ♖xe6 ♕a3 33 ♖e2! there is no way to save the game: 33...♖xg5 (33...♕a7 34 ♕f6! etc.) 34 ♕f6+ ♖g7 35 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 36 ♕xd8+ ♖g8 37 ♕f6+ ♖g7 38 ♕xc6 ♕a7+ 39 ♔f3.

32 ♕e5+! ♖g7 (or 32...♔g8 33 exf7+ ♔xf7 34 ♕e7+ ♔g8 35 ♕xg5+ with inevitable mate) **33 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 34 ♕xc3 f6 35 e7 ♖a8 36 ♕xf6 ♗e4 37 ♖g1 ♖xa2+ 38 ♔e1 1-0**

'A brilliant canvas, with open tactical play – like a last lesson to young talents, like a reminder of the young Tal, who demolished the bastions of the highly-experienced Botvinnik on the way to winning the chess crown back in 1960,' wrote grandmaster Mikhail Gurevich, a participant in the Barcelona tournament. 'After this wonderfully played game Tal was in excellent spirits. He said that he would fly to Moscow for another operation, and hoped that by autumn he would be fully recovered... In Moscow three weeks later he played in a strong blitz tournament, where fate paired him with Garry Kasparov. Tal, who was already terminally ill, inflicted the only defeat on the current world champion, and in the end he finished an honourable third after Kasparov and Bareev.'

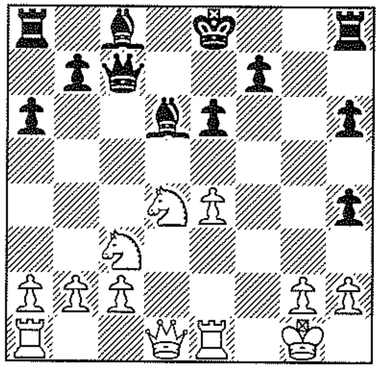
In our last meeting Mikhail Nekhemevich remained true to himself. I give the opening from memory.

Game 149
M.Tal-G.Kasparov
Moscow (blitz) 28 May 1992
Sicilian Defence B51

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 d4

♘gf6 5 0-0 a6 6 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 7 ♘c3 e6 8 ♗g5 ♕c7 9 ♖e1 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘e5 11 f4 h6! 12 ♗h4 g5! 13 fxe5 gxh4 14 exd6 ♗xd6

Is it not time for White to concern himself with how to equalise? That's not what happened!



15 ♘d5?! exd5 16 exd5+ ♔f8 17 ♕f3

In the end Black beat off the dashing attack, retaining his extra material, but... overstepped the time limit!

A month later Tal died in a Moscow hospital and was buried in his native Riga. He left us too early. He departed, leaving us his games, his enigmas and legends; an indelible trace in the history of chess.

In conclusion, here a few memorable comments by the chess kings about the 'Riga magician'.

Euwe: 'It is evident that Tal has something from each of the previous world champions. From Morphy – chess brilliance, from Steinitz – something magic, from Lasker – the psychological approach, from Alekhine – unprecedented tempo play, and from Botvinnik – energy. Probably the only thing that he lacks is the calm common sense of Smyslov...'

Botvinnik: 'He was loved: isn't it this that constitutes happiness? At the chessboard Tal was implacable, but in life he was a seemingly inoffensive person. But at the same time he was intelligent and ironic. Chess was his passion, or, more correctly, not chess in general, but playing chess. He did not write books (*he dictated them!* – G.K.), he did not publish analyses, and it was only because he was forced to that he studied opening theory. He was a genuine virtuoso: he gained pleasure when, relying on his phenomenal combinative vision, he found paradoxical solutions in a game.'

Smyslov: 'Tal's appearance in big-time chess had the effect of an exploding bomb, since his style of play was distinguished by extraordinary combinative brilliance. The pieces seemed to come alive in his hands. Everything worked for him, and only he could create and play "his" seemingly irrational positions.'

Petrosian: 'A genius in chess is someone who is ahead of his time, but this can be seen only later, by looking back. From this point of view, very few can be called geniuses. Morphy, Steinitz... Perhaps Tal. The Riga grandmaster introduced into chess something that was not fully understood by his contemporaries. Unfortunately, all too soon we gained the opportunity to look back with admiration at the peak of Tal's remarkable play.'

Spassky: 'I was on excellent terms with Tal: we never had a single dispute, although we always battled desperately at the board... Misha was perhaps the only great player who was unaware of any feeling of envy. He played best, of course, when he held the initiative; without it he would suffocate.'

Karpov: 'In his time Tal, as it is said, "came, saw and conquered"... He staggered everyone with his combinative talent, exceptional intuition, practical sharpness of mind and phenomenal memory. But gradually players became accustomed to his attacks; it can be said that Tal taught them to defend. In turn, having found the keys to his attacking style, they forced Tal himself to relearn... His style changed completely compared with the style of the 1960s, and became more universal.'

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